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Expository sermons on the  
Heidelberg catechism





Expository Sermons  
on the Heidelberg Catechism

# CATECHISM SERMONS

By DR. SCHENCK

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## EXPOSITORY SERMONS ON THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

*213 Pages.*

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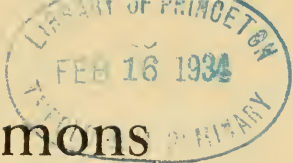
## THE APOSTLES CREED IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

*212 Pages*

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## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

*245 Pages*



# Expository Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

By

REV. FERDINAND S. SCHENCK, D.D., LL.D.

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## EXPLANATIONS

My Expository Sermons on the 34th to the 52nd Lord's Day of the Catechism were published in 1902 in a volume entitled "The Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer."

My sermons in Exposition of the 7th to the 22nd Lord's Day of the Catechism were published in 1918 in a volume entitled "The Apostle's Creed in the Twentieth Century."

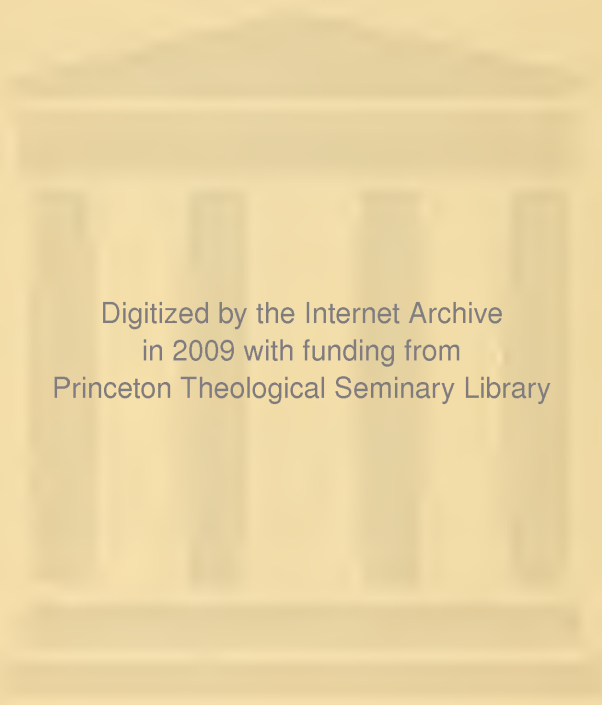
To reprint these two volumes with this book would be too expensive and would make a volume too bulky to handle easily.

This volume contains my expository sermons on the first six Lord's Days of the Catechism and on the 23rd to the 34th Lord's Days. These Lord's Days cover what may be described as the distinctive truths of the Catechism.

The former volumes may be obtained separately.

F. S. SCHENCK.

July 15, 1920.



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## PREFACE

**I**N 1563 A. D., the Heidelberg Catechism was published. In 1576 the first Synod of Dort declared it the Symbol of Doctrine for the Reformed Church of Holland and required its ministers to preach upon it at one service of every Lord's Day.

With certain changes of form, that requirement has had a continuous existence until this day, and to facilitate it the Catechism has been divided into 52 Lord's Days.

The present constitution of our Reformed Church in America requires "every minister to explain to his congregation at an ordinary service on the Lord's Day the points of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, so that the exposition may be completed within the term of four years."

It also requires the minister to secure the catechetical instructions of the youth. It also directs these requirements to be made in every call made by a church to a minister to become its pastor. When accepted, it then becomes an essential part of the contract entered into by both church and pastor, which neither party has any right to change or ignore.

The constitution also provides that each Classis once each year shall make an inquiry of each church whether these requirements have been fully complied with, and shall report the results to the Synod.

We discern in these constitutional requirements two strong and distinguishing characteristics of our Reformed Church in America. The one is the spiritual oversight of the individual churches by the Classes and Synod.

We have no Bishops, as do our sister churches, the Episcopal and the Methodist. Our individual churches are not independent of each other, as are the Congregational and Baptist Churches. We are Presbyterian, but each Classis excels each Presbytery in our constitution describing the special subjects and the particular manner of its spiritual oversight of its churches.

We regard this well defined oversight as far better than that of a Bishop, far better than no oversight at all—and far better than only an undefined oversight.

The second distinguished characteristic of our Church is the required expository preaching upon the Heidelberg Catechism. This usage of our Church has been in existence now for nearly three hundred and fifty years. These two features distinguish our Church from all other denominations. They depend for pulpit preaching entirely upon the peculiarity of the preacher's mind. Some truths may be unduly magnified by

him, some may be slighted and some may be virtually ignored. Our Church gives free scope to the individuality of the preacher in the choice of his subjects, and in addition, requires him to give regular instruction on the great articles of the Christian faith in order to preserve the truth and to promote the prosperity of the Church.

When our Church became independent of the Mother Church in Holland, and formed its own constitution in 1792, this requirement of usage was adopted without change. There have been several revisions of the constitution since, in 1833, in 1874 and the last, after long consideration by the whole Church, in 1916. In all these the required expository preaching upon the Heidelberg Catechism has been retained. Quite a large number of our churches and pastors in the course of the years have become slack in allegiance to this special requirement, and some even opposed to it. In 1910 a committee was appointed by the General Synod to ascertain the general usage in the whole Church, and so the mind of the Church in this important matter. We examined the records of every Classis but one, a small Classis in the Far West—and found that at least two-thirds of the churches faithfully observed the constitutional required to the letter, and that all ministers and churches claimed to observe it in spirit. In comparing the record with that of five years before, we found that the number of churches observing the letter of

the requirement was increasing, particularly in the Eastern part of the Church. The Heidelberg Catechism is finely adapted for preaching, as it is not a mere intellectual statement of the truths of our religion, but it describes the experience of these truths in the hearts and lives of the believers. To expound it in the successive Lord's Days gives to both preacher and people the highest ideal of Christian preaching and Christian living. The Catechism not merely describes the Christian life as one might do who observes it from the outside, it gives the inward principles, feelings and spirit of that life by one who lives it. It tells not merely about the Christ one has heard of, but it describes the Christ one trusts—loves and serves. To promote such preaching of Christ and such living of Christ is the highest ideal of both pulpit and pew.

A course of progressive preaching on the great truths of our religion will be attractive and profitable to the people. I once became pastor of a church where the Heidelberg Catechism had not been preached in twenty years, and where the evening services were very much run down. I built up the evening service by preaching upon the successive Lord's Days of the Catechism. Many of our pastors have catechetical classes, many encourage the teaching of the catechism in the Sunday Schools. This preaching in exposition of the catechism commends it in the instructions of the youth, and this is a fine way of

“teaching teachers to teach” the essential truths of the Holy Scriptures, as experimentally received. This progressive and proportioned preaching and teaching of the truths of the Christian religion from the experience of the soul, must lead souls to feel the need of a Savior, to trust Him as their personal Savior, and to become devoted followers of Christ in the various activities of His Church.

I am sending forth this book of sermons with the aim of stimulating this kind of preaching and teaching, and to quicken and increase a craving of the people for a full experience of Christian truth as set forth in our excellent catechism.

It may be proper for me, in doing so, to speak of my own experience in such preaching and of the aid I have recently received.

In my four pastorates, two in the country and two in the city, I have preached five entire courses of sermons on the Catechism, making such improvements in each course, as circumstances permitted. I may say they were received by all my congregations with as much fervor as my other sermons. For the past twenty years, I have as part of the course on preaching in this Seminary, directed and heard the students preach upon the Catechism. Many of these sermons have been very fine, and much of the criticism of the students of each other has been very suggestive and helpful. I have been an

enthusiastic teacher and many students have been enthusiastic scholars of this kind of preaching. These sermons are the outcome of my preaching improved by the criticisms and suggestions of the student's preaching.

F. S. S.

*New Brunswick, N. J.*  
*1920.*



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I.

FIRST LORD'S DAY OF THE  
HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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“CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE”

*Ye are Christ's.*—I COR. 3:23.

ONE of the finest descriptions of life is that it is the adjustment of forces within to forces without; this is not a definition of life,—no one can give that,—it only says what it does. The living being is dependent upon its environment—it has the power of adapting itself to its surroundings. One of the finest descriptions of the use of the mind gives the same thought. Its use is to enable the man to come into harmony with his environment. This may be physical—the earth where he dwells—or social—the relations with his fellows—or spiritual—the God, “in Whom he lives, and moves and has his being.” Now it is quite evident that knowledge of the surroundings is the condition of coming into harmony with them: the bird must know where to find water, and food and the place for its nest; the man must know where to find God and how to come into harmony with Him. Still it is just as evident that knowledge alone is not enough: the bird may be caught in a snare and so be utterly unable to find water or food or nest; the man may know where and

how to come into harmony with God, and yet he may utterly refuse to act upon his knowledge; he, to, may be caught in the snare of worldliness and so fail to attain the noblest life—harmony with his God.

A catechism is a clear, concise and full statement of the truths of religion; it gives us knowledge of utmost importance to our well being; but knowledge is not enough. If the catechism can give us this knowledge with the experience of one who has acted upon these truths, then it guides the example and the incentive to like action on our part, then it commends the truths it teaches to the acceptance of the mind, to the approval of conscience and to the action of the will, by the experience of one who has fully tested them and who tells us the blessedness of coming into harmony with God.

This feature of experience is the striking characteristic of our Heidelberg Catechism. The first question:

“What is the only comfort in life and death?” gives the keynote of the whole catechism. It requires in its answer more than an intellectual statement of truth, however correct and full that may be, it must be experimental, it must give the personal experience of one coming into harmony with the person, God, by accepting and obeying the truth. This is clearly seen if we contrast it with the first question of another great catechism:

“What is the chief end of man?”

The answer is:

“To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

The maker of anything, a watch for example, is glorified when the thing made fulfills the ideal of the maker, and the watch is only a good one as it keeps time. So the question with its answer of that catechism is only a matter of pure intellect. An irreligious man may give it—a desperately wicked man of great mental power may see and state this truth—even Satan himself may give the answer full and clear. But Satan is dumb before our question:

“What is your only comfort in life and death?”

He may know all the truths of religion but he has no comfort from them.

Comfort is relief from past pain or distress and from all fear of its return, or it is opposing to a still existent evil a present good the enjoyment of which lessens the trial or strengthens one to bear it. Our whole Catechism then is more than an intellectual statement of the truths of religion. It states these truths as they result in the experience of the one who accepts and obeys them, who trusts in God.

The Catechism is experience throughout. We now confine our attention to the first question. It clearly can be answered affirmatively only by experience. There may of course be many negative answers. We may readily think of three large classes of people of whom we may ask this question and who will give widely different answers to it.

Let me ask this question first of that large class who are careless about religion. There are many grades in the class—a wide diversity both of character and condition. This is a Church Audience, but there are doubtless many of this class present now. They are here from various motives but in their hearts they are conscious they are careless of religion. Take the very best of this class of people, morally upright, successful in life, having good social standing, living in happy homes, but conscious that they are careless about God, that they are worldly minded. Let me ask the best representative of this class our question:

“What is your only comfort in life?”

“Comfort,” he answers, “I have no need of comfort. I have the good things of life, its worthy employments, pleasures and friends. Do not disturb me; take comfort to someone who needs it, I do not.”

I ask still further:

“What is your only comfort in death?”

“Death,” he answers, “I do not allow myself to think about death. When it comes I suppose I will die as others do. I do not think of what may be beyond. I only hope that as I have lived a fairly good life here, and had a fairly good time I may have the same experience after death.”

Poor voyager on life’s mysterious sea—your ship is strong, the sea is smooth, the wind is fair, the sky is clear. But you are simply

drifting, you know not how near a rocky coast, how near a roaring storm—you have no knowledge of the stars—no chart on board—no compass—no pilot—no captain,—you are bound for no harbor,—you are simply drifting on life's wide ocean.

This is a very earnest question I am asking you—it arises from a consideration of many important truths you ignore. Are you living without a thought of responsibility to God for the use of the powers He gives you, of the time He grants you, without any gratitude to Him,—without even consulting Him? You say you have no need of comfort; but rather is it not possible that you are in great need, but that your conscience is asleep, that you are drugged with worldliness, that you simply do not recognize your need?

The second large class of people of whom this question may be asked is also of many grades and conditions; some may be living wicked lives; some may be living upright lives as their neighbors recognize; but as a class they have an aroused and condemning conscience—they may be said to be convicted of sin. There are also grades of this conviction; in some it is very deep and harassing; they sometimes plunge into sin to drown it, or they harden themselves to bear it; in others it is more shallow and less disturbing, but still a disagreeable companion whenever it demands a hearing.

Let me ask our question of all the grades of

this large class. There may be many here in this Church Audience.

“What is your only comfort in life and death?”

The answer is prompt and clear:

“We have no comfort at all, either in life or in view of death. Our religion has thus far brought us only unrest and distress. Tell us where we may secure comfort and you will confer the greatest favor upon us.”

And now I will ask our question of the third class of people—those who are really Christians, those who believe in Christ as their Saviour.

“What is your only comfort in life and death?”

The answer comes clear and strong from each one:

“That I belong to my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

Doubtless there are many grades of character and conditions also in this class. Doubtless also the large proportion of this Church Audience is made up of the many grades of this large class.

The answer given to this question in our Catechism may be of great service to us all: to the careless to arouse a sense of need and its supply; to the convicted of sin in their trouble, to give them full relief; and to believers to make more clear and full their trust in Christ, as they define and describe it, and to show them a way in which they may serve Christ by telling others of Him.

The answer covers the past, the present, and the future. In the past the believer came to



recognize his need of the forgiveness of his sins and of strength to resist sinfulness. He had tried to live as his own governor, as belonging to himself, as his own, but he had learned to recognize that his own will had gone far astray from God's law of his life,—that he was under the condemnation of that law and under the power of his own deceived, ignorant and stubborn will. Then he learned of Jesus Christ as the lover of mankind, as the lover of his guilty and sinful soul, and he began to trust Him as his Saviour. Now he belongs to Christ for he says:

“Christ with His precious blood hath fully satisfied for all my sins.”

We know something in our business life of ransom,—one's home has been sold for unpaid taxes,—he may ransom it under certain conditions; also in history of man, a prisoner is ransomed by an exchange. So Christ says He gave His life a “ransom for many”; so Paul says:

“While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

We can never fully realize the price He paid,—He gave His life to redeem us from our sins. He has ransomed us.

More than this the answer says:

“Christ has delivered me from all the power of the devil.”

The believer had thought he was his own, was guiding his own life, but in reality he was deceived by Satan; he was yielding him service, following his devices, yielding to his temptations.

But at length he recognized there was a sinful nature within him which held him a willing prisoner; call it by whatever name you will, recognizing its source and its power, it is the enemy of God in the world and in our souls. Christ called it the "Prince of this world," and said He would by His death strip him of all his disguises, judge him, and cast him out. John, the beloved disciple of Christ said:

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil."

So the believer trusting Christ says:

"He hath delivered me from all the power of the devil."

We may not fully recognize the power of evil over us or the dreadful battle Christ fought with the Prince of this world, even unto death, but He has stripped him of his disguises, broken his power, and aroused our manhood to fight against him as our enemy. We belong to Christ,—He hath redeemed us from the penalty and the power of our sins. We are His by ransom, by deliverance.

The comfort of the believer is that he has been delivered from a dreadful condition, that he belongs now (in his gratitude and devotion), to the one who had delivered him and that he has a growing appreciation of his deliverer's power, love and faithfulness as he contemplates his acts of deliverance. Christ has ransomed us, has satisfied fully for all our sins. The business

man has become involved in debt, slowly, steadily, for years. At the close of a period of anxiety his creditors are about to sell him out, and so notify him. He goes home at the close of that day, and all the world is dark to him,—he has failed—he must tell his wife and children, their home must be given up,—his friends will soon know it,—the whole community will know it,—his helpless failure shrouds his whole world in gloom. Now his greatest creditor comes to him,—he has not seen him in years,—he proves to be the friend of his youth. He says:

“I cannot see you fail. I will satisfy your other lesser creditors. I, your chief creditor, will sacrifice myself for you. I will even go in business with you as your partner. We will renew companionship, the friendship of our boyhood days.” Who can tell how the gloom of failure passes away before such sacrifice, before such ransom, and how the renewed friendship will incite to effort and success. But any business affair of modern life can throw but little light upon the great mystery of Christ’s sacrifice for us in His infinite love, of His paying our debts even to Himself, to divine justice, of His satisfying for all our sins. Before God we are hopelessly in debt, complete and absolute failures, our future filled with gloom, and Christ, the Son of God, takes our place, pays our debts, satisfies completely for us,—yes, even becomes our surety, our partner for all the future. And all out of love for us. Surely in gratitude and devotion,

we will not try any longer to live for ourselves. We belong to Him, we will live with Him and for Him.

So also He has delivered me from all the power of the devil. We can easily in these dreadful days of warfare imagine the hard lot of one taken captive by the enemy and held fast in prison,—day and night the hardship, the gloom of his captivity oppresses him. Then one dark night his old Captain holding him in high esteem risks his life, fights his way through the guards, comes to the prison door, forces it open, awakens the sleeping prisoner, gives him a sword, and now together, his Captain and he fight their way back through their foes to their own army and freedom again. Think you that rescued soldier can ever forget the gloom of prison, and that he owes his freedom to the love and sacrifice of his Captain, surely he will be loyal to the Captain his whole life long. But any deliverance from a bodily prison can throw little light upon Christ's deliverance from our spiritual bondage.

This seems to be only in the past, but it is not altogether so. It is true the saving acts of ransom and deliverance were wrought by Christ while He lived upon the earth centuries ago. He loved us then with the wonderful love which led Him to die the shameful death of the Cross for us. But He lives, Who once was dead, the triumphant and glorious Savior, and He loves us now with the same wonderful love, He forgives and He renews us in His spirit today. So we

think of our past when we first became conscious of our sins and sought His forgiveness, when we first saw the hideous nature and malignant designs of sin, the Prince of the world, and sought Christ's deliverance. Christ was our Savior when we first trusted Him; just as truly He is our Savior today. He is enthroned in power and glory, He lives and He loves and He saves us today, He ransoms and He delivers.

The answer of the Catechism describes now the comfort of belonging to Christ in all the varied experiences of the present life. Christ owns me. He will take care of His own. Christ says:

"No one shall pluck them out of My hand."

Paul says:

"All things work together for good to them that love God."

Christ says:

"Abide in Me and I in you."

Paul says:

"If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life."

He Who loved us so He died for us now loves us as He lives for us. This does not mean the believer will have only an easy time in this life. He may have hard battles to fight with the evil within him and without him,—battles calling for all his courage and strength, but his great Captain is leading and watching him. He may have great duties to do calling for all his devotion

and care, but God's grace is sufficient for him. He may have heavy trials to bear heavy and long continuing, but Christ assures him, "I am with thee, I will not leave thee nor forsake thee." The believer too is sailing on the mysterious sea of life—it may be very dark and tempestuous, the winds and the waves seek his destruction, but in the roar of the storm he may shout "All's Well," for his Captain is on board and in full command. Also if the sea is smooth, the sky clear and the wind fair this voyager on life's ocean is not drifting, he is sailing to a fair harbor.

The answer of the Catechism now speaks of the future. I belong unto Christ and "he assures me of eternal life." Christ says to his disciples, "Where I am there ye shall be also." Paul says: "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better."

Eternal life begins now. Christ says: "This is life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." To know Christ, to trust Him, to adore Him, to love Him is to be led by His Holy Spirit and to be sincerely willing to live unto Him—an ever growing appreciation, friendship, and intermingling of life with Christ—a life growing in his likeness. Here amid the many blessings, the great service of this life, here amid the many duties and temptations of this life, here amid the growth and discipline of this life. What of the life beyond?

We know but little of the circumstances, of the eternal life beyond earth's varied scenes. It is so glorious that it cannot be fully described in our language arising only out of an earthly experience. Let it suffice, we will be with Christ where He is. What is good enough for Him will be good enough for us. We belong to Him and He loves us so He wills to have us with Him in eternity.

So let the worldling seek something richer far than all he now possesses. Let the troubled in conscience find relief in trusting Christ. Let the believer learn more and more in his deep experience of the comfort of belonging to his faithful savior Jesus Christ.

Let us all having spiritual life come into full harmony with our highest and all inclusive environment, with our God, our Father revealed in His Son, by the Holy Spirit!



## II.

### SECOND LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

---

#### “NATURE OF SIN”

*By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin.—ROM. 3:20.*

THE Epistle to the Romans is divided into three parts. The first part shows that all men are sinners under the law, Jew and Gentile alike and it ends with our text. The second part shows there is full and free salvation for all by faith in Jesus Christ and it ends with the 11th Chapter. The remainder of the Epistle is an exhortation to believers in Christ to lead a holy life.

Our Catechism is constructed upon the plan of the Epistle to the Romans. The second question concisely sets forth this plan. Our text says the law of God brings us to a knowledge of our sin.

The Catechism says that our knowledge of our misery is a necessary step to securing comfort. One may be in danger and not know it—he may be sound asleep in a burning house,—he may have a deadly disease and not feel it. He is a true friend who will wake him up in time to escape, who will make him conscious of his disease in time to apply sufficient remedy to it.



A wise and brave man desires to know his true condition with reference to physical dangers that he may properly treat them. With regard to spiritual diseases and dangers it behooves each one of us to face the truth however miserable it may make us, for there may be a remedy, there may be an escape. In ignorance there is death, in knowledge there is life.

Let us now therefore frankly, fully, and courageously compare ourselves with the law of God. How do we measure up to the standard of the law of our being? Christ teaches us this law briefly:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

As soon as the law is declared there is something within us that instantly responds “The law is right.” God has given us all our powers and preserves us in their enjoyment, they should turn to Him as naturally as flowers turn to the sun. Each one is a creature of God,—he should love himself as such a creature. Every other man is likewise a creature of God. Each one should love each other as he loves himself. The proper love of one’s self is the standard of the love for one’s neighbor. Each one should love one’s self to make the most possible out of himself according to the ideal of God. Call this, if you please, to make himself the super-man. Then

he should love every other man as he loves himself, to make him too a super-man,—far above man's present ideals to reach God's ideal. Instead of one's self struggling in seeking from another or even oppressing that other, true self seeking becomes seeking the best for every other man also.

There are three striking particulars in which this law differs from laws made by man.

First,—It is Universal. The fact that it awakens this instant response shows it is already written in our nature. It is not for a single nation but for the race. True there are some portions of the race who know it clearly—the Christian portions. There are others who know it dimly or not at all,—the heathen portions. The law is written upon their nature but it is so blurred they do not read it.

Let us not think about them,—how they will be judged. Let us leave that to God,—surely the Judge of all the earth will do right.

Let us look steadily at our own case as we face this universal law of our being, for there is not a single one of us exempt from it.

In the second place this law is spiritual. The laws made by man command outward obedience. Keeping the letter satisfies such laws. But in this law there is no letter, it is all spirit. Not an outward act is commanded but an inward: the mind, the heart, the soul, to love with all one's strength; the outward acts follow as pure water flows from a pure spring.

There are several features of love we are very familiar with among ourselves. Love delights in the one loved, to be in his presence, or to think about him gives pleasure. Then also love strives to please the one loved, consults him and acts in harmony with his tastes and desires. Then also love seeks a return love, and strives in constant and strong feeling and action to awaken and strengthen such return love. When we thus analyze love we see the kind of acts that will flow from it; they will not be irksome, not from fear, but from delight—striving to please God and rejoicing in His love for us.

In the third place this law is distinguished from all man made laws in that God made it. Man makes laws for his own government as he discovers his needs. Man is by nature a social being and his relation to his fellows forms the basis of many of his laws. He has an ideal of God, often very high, as also a social being and forms rules of action based on his relation to Him. But no enactment of man, however lofty, has attained to this perfect law. Besides in the supernatural revelation of God culminating in Jesus Christ we find this law described as coming direct from God. He is the great law giver of this perfect law.

Two truths are thus clearly brought to our attention. God had a plan in making man,—a plan in His eternal, all-wise, and all-powerful mind before man was created. This law therefore is the exact description of that plan; it

shows the purpose of God in creating man and so it defines and describes all man's powers. Man is the intelligent maker of many things. The plan exists in his mind before the thing is made; for example, a clock,—the plan is a law for the clock, it is constructed to measure time; to set it to do any other kind of work degrades it and dishonors its maker.

Since God is infinitely good and has at infinite pains through all ages created man; the highest honor and highest good for man is to fulfill God's plan in accomplishing the object for which he was made. To live any other kind of life degrades man and dishonors God. Man's highest happiness can only be found in attaining God's plan, in keeping His perfect law of love.

The other truth clearly seen is that the authority of the law giver cannot be questioned and so the law is the expression of His nature. Sometimes it may be a question of a man made law whether it does not exceed its authority and so condemn itself. Here the authority is clear. It cannot be exceeded and thus only the character of God is seen in it. How much God cares for man's obedience may be seen in the value He places upon a man as he gives this law describing him. God is infinitely good and the law is the expression of His goodness. The right of the good God to govern His creatures is unquestioned. The law therefore flows from the goodness of God and so expresses it as truly as it describes man's powers.

We are now ready to consider the next question of the Catechism, it is intensely personal and it requires our faithful consideration and so enters into the deep experience of each one of us.

Can you keep all these things perfectly? In no wise, is the answer given. In no wise for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor. If the question was: Have you kept this law perfectly? I suppose each one of us would answer, if we thought seriously at all,—No, I have not. If the question was: Do you keep this law perfectly? I suppose each one of us would be compelled to answer,—No, I do not. But the question is deeper: Can you keep it perfectly? It covers the other two by asking the reason: Why have you not kept it? Why do you not keep it? It goes still deeper: Why have you come—why do you come so far short of it? It goes still deeper: Is your disobedience merely a negative—a failure to keep it—or is it a positive one—a transgression—a doing the reverse, a hating? I suppose each one of us would hesitate about using that strong word hate still the Apostle Paul uses a word like it. He says the carnal, that is, “The natural mind, is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The Catechism softens the harsh hard word, enmity, a little by saying: I am prone to hate—.

But is even that so? Can I truthfully say it describes me? I am indifferent to God. I ignore Him and His law. I neglect my fellowman. I

do not care for him, but I go no further. I do not hate either one. But consider a little. Suppose you have set your heart upon some object, made it the one thing you live for, and God forbids it and opposes you, or man sets himself across your path and tries to defeat you. You are, as you say, careless and indifferent about God and man, if all goes well, but if they are strongly and persistently against you, if they stand across your cherished life effort and you still press on, is there not something resembling hate awakened in your strong and losing fight? A proneness may not be open and extreme at all times but it arouses itself against God's holiness and justice, it arouses itself against man when he becomes disagreeable to us, when he dislikes and hates and fights us; it lies in the depths of our nature, and as by a flash it sometimes gives us a hideous sight of ourselves. Call it what you will, there is something in our nature opposed to God and man, that violates the law of love, does not keep it, is prone to break it. In proportion as this is true of each one of us, or rather in proportion as we are conscious of its truth, we must recognize it as a condition fraught with danger, a miserable condition. We may be loath to look at it steadily and in detail, but surely it is our interest to know the whole truth, and we should bravely and frankly seek this knowledge.

There are clearly three elements of misery in disobeying this law of love:

The first is the absence of the noble character and high happiness of which man is capable in this law of his being. It is the law of his being, of his whole nature so designed by his creator. Man tries to find happiness in power, honor, riches, friends, in various ways, by great efforts; he attains some happiness through the fragments of love he cherishes, also through the activity of his powers, but he misses the full happiness that can only come from the full love of God and man. He has great powers given him for a noble purpose; ignoring the purpose or opposing it, the powers however great can never be satisfied; they wear themselves out in fruitless effort; their greatness makes their failure pitiful. Happiness above us, beyond us, out of our reach, and yet we know we were made for it, that we could have it if we would try for it in the right way,—this surely is an element of misery.

The second element of misery in disobeying the law of our being is in the existence and the possible raging of evil passions. To name them is to see their hideous nature, Avarice, Lust, Pride, Envy, Jealousy, and that thing we are prone to, Hatred. Who would welcome such powers? But they are within us in the place where full love of God and man should be. We would not have the angel of light and love dwelling in us so the serpents of darkness and hate are there. And while we try to keep them quiet generally, there arise provocations and temptations when they rage within us and torment us



with their spite. And how they often rage in this world that refuses to love God, how they rage in the social relations of man, in social life, business life, political life,—how they sometimes break forth in cruel war among nations. Over all the tumult and strife, over all the cruelty and conflict, over all the oppression and want, there speaks the law of God—Love—Love. If men would only listen and obey, the tumult would hush, the conflict cease, the oppression and want pass away forever. But let us not think of the race, of the mass of men except as we are a part of it. Let us look steadily at our own nature. Each one of us must see the misery of having such hideous passions within us.

The third element of misery in our disobeying the law of our being is the awakening of an accusing conscience. Here also let us be faithful with ourselves. Do not let us say too hard things about ourselves, nor too soft things, let us clearly look at the truth. Law grows upon us as we consider its nature in its source. The law of a township may be a small matter. One breaks it and pays the fine. The conscience is quiet. The law of a nation is a much greater matter. The element of this disloyalty, of treason may enter it and the whole nation arises to punish. Here conscience is disturbed. Go a step higher. One breaks a law of humanity. There are extradition laws among civilized nations. All humanity now arises to punish. The man is the outcast, abhorred by all. His conscience now is



terrible. One step higher. One breaks a law of God. One breaks the law of His own being. Where will he fly now, beyond township lines, beyond the nation's boundary, beyond the reach of humanity to some Island of the Sea? What difference does it make? He cannot fly from himself, from his aroused conscience. He cannot fly from God.

The law grows upon us as we consider the rights invaded. In this case it is not the rights of a child, perhaps we could make that right again. It includes the rights of many children; it is not merely the rights of a man, of a nation, or of humanity; it includes all these, but it is far greater,—we have invaded the rights of God.

There are many words in use among ourselves and they are hideous enough when so used. They become terrible when used in reference to God. One steals, takes something from another, usually it is small compared to the other's possessions. Here one steals from God and he takes all God's possessions he can lay his hands on, for all his powers belong to God. One commits a breach of trust. In this case man is God's steward and here he has taken all God has intrusted to his care. We abhor injustice, ingratitude, disloyalty among men. These are far worse in reference to God.

What shall we do? We are not satisfied, have not the happiness God longs to give us. We have sinful passions within us, which bring only evil in their exercise. We have an accusing

conscience. We have broken the law of our being. Our conscience cannot say too hard things against us.

Oh my soul! Unsatisfied, sinful, conscience-stricken,—where will you go? Will you go to sleep; only to awaken to the same condition. Will you plunge into worldly business and pleasure when you know they cannot satisfy you?

Where will you go? Why not go to Jesus Christ? Can you live without Him? In His life this law shines in perfect obedience. He loved God, His Father, supremely. He loved Himself, was the perfect Man fulfilling God's ideal of manhood. He loved His fellow-men as Himself to lift them to the ideal of God. He loved each one of us more than Himself, loved us so He died for us, to redeem us from our sins. He is seeking you and seeking you to save you, to bless you with His saving love. He is even now using your present thoughtfulness, perhaps distress to win you to himself. Commit your soul's salvation to Jesus Christ! Trust Him!

### III.

## THIRD LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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### “ORIGIN AND EXTENT OF SIN”

*For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.—ROM. 5:19.*

THE Second Lord's Day of our Catechism held before us the law of God as the standard of character.

When we examined ourselves by this law we were compelled to confess that we did not love God supremely, that we did not even love our neighbor as ourselves—on the contrary that there was a nature within us prone to hate both God and our neighbor.

Several questions now arise in the thoughtful mind of vast importance to us and this Lord's Day of the Catechism gives frank answers to them—questions concerning the extent, the degree and the source of our sinfulness under this law of our being.

Concerning the extent of sinfulness we can readily see that it is universal. We may be better than some of our fellow-men, or we may be worse than some, but none of us will claim that we are different from them. We belong to

the race of mankind. We are like our fellow-men as far as we have observed ourselves and them, in our views and feelings, in our appetites and passions, in our plans and actions—we belong to a race that is sinful.

We look back over history and from the time the first ranks of men emerge from the mist of the remote past until the present day is reached—among savages, among barbarians, among the civilized, while there has been great advance—many noble lives, many ideals and many great attainments, the race as a race has not kept and does not keep the law of love. Whatever we may think of some of the theories of science, there is manifest reason to speak of the “struggle for existence” and of “the survival of the fittest.” Whatever attainment there has been made by the strong over the weak, whatever of advance in great classes of men has been reached, still no race of mankind and no individual of any race has attained to anything near perfection according to this law of our being. Whatever sympathy there may have been awakened for the fallen, and helpfulness for the weak, there has been and there is now a proneness to hate both God and Man. Often a peaceful and prosperous civilization has been but the surface under which jealousies and hatreds of nations were burning, and just now in our day these seething passions have exploded in Europe in the greatest and most cruel war of the history of the race. Then, too, when we examine the Scriptures their super-

natural revelation of God is evidently made to a sinful race, it culminates in Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners.

Now, let us look at the degree of our sinfulness. Is it a mere surface matter not controlling the depths of our being, is it a kind of disease which has fastened itself upon an otherwise healthy person and which may be perhaps easily cast off?

It is very important that we should have clear views of the true case—that we should be sternly faithful to ourselves in this matter.

It is quite evident it has not been cast off by any considerable portion of the race; it has not even been cast entirely off by a single individual.

There have been many deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice, our human nature is capable of great things, but still it is under sin—it has not cast it off—not become free from it.

Then besides we ourselves whatever great efforts we have made have found it impossible to cast it off. We may have subdued this or that evil propensity, but certainly not all such propensities. If anyone should claim “I am free from sin,” “I am perfect,” our neighbors would ridicule us. But none of us makes such a claim. The danger is our being satisfied with a low attainment, of being contented to be sinful, of satisfying ourselves that we have certain good traits, that we are generally pretty good, at any rate not as bad as some others.

This experience personal and of the race is

confirmed by the Scriptures. Christ said "Except one be born anew he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The Apostle Paul said "Ye were dead through your trespasses and sins."

The Catechism states the degree of our sinfulness in very strong terms—it says, "we are so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good and are inclined to all wickedness."

Before we can accept this statement, we must try to understand it.

We judge men by their motives. We look at the character back of the action. Is the supreme love of God and the proper love of man the motive? The character? Yes. Then the action is absolutely good. No. Then the action may be relatively good by other standards, but it is not wholly good by this standard. There is much relative good in the world—here is a good family—a good husband and father, a good mother and children. Good brothers and sisters. Good certainly, and blessed therein. So in our sight. So in God's sight as far as it goes; and God rejoices therein and approves to that extent. But it is quite possible he may see in each family an entire absence of any thought of God or love for Him, and also a great lack of love for their fellow-men. There is relative good in such a case—and there may be many such cases—but no absolute good.

So a man may be a good citizen, giving himself to the welfare of his country on the battlefield, in legislative hall, in official station, in

private life. He is relatively good in our sight, and of course in God's sight. Yet God may see in him no affection for God, no gratitude to Him, no desire even to obey His law, and the man sees it himself and acknowledges it. There is no absolute good in him.

We may imagine that this earth sweeps out of its orbit at a slight angle, or at a greater one; it would carry its hills and mountains, its valleys and plains, its rivers and oceans with it and for a while they would be lighted in beauty and warmed in life by the sun it was leaving. Still leaving the Sun it would be slowly perhaps but surely going out into the chill and darkness of death. Man has noble powers that may result in many noble actions; he carries these with him; they are a part of himself when he sweeps out of his orbit; but his sole, absolute good is to revolve about God, to love him supremely; and of this he is wholly incapable; the only hope for him is that the Sun—his God will again draw him from his wandering out in darkness back into the orbit of true life and light.

This corruption permeates our whole being, there is no part of our nature free from it, evil clings to our imagination, our memory, our reasoning, our will, the whole earth, the whole man is out of his orbit, the slightest introspection shows the corruption not only of our physical nature, appetites and passions, but of our spiritual as well, as our thoughts, our feelings, our desires.



The opposite of good now faces us—wickedness. What one of us but recognizes that we need restraint—we need the relative good within us and about us. Above all we need the grace of our God to keep us from going out into the chill and darkness of wickedness and death.

Some may call this the doctrine of total depravity. That is an unfortunate combination of strong words—and gives us the terrible indictment that we are as bad as we can be. This is not held by anyone; it is far from true—and is carefully avoided by our Catechism. But we are depraved, corrupt, and this corruption is total in the sense that it extends to our whole nature and inclines us to all wickedness. We are inclined that way, we are sweeping in that direction, but we have not reached that extreme.

It is very important we should have right views of our sinfulness. Wrong conceptions of sin lead to wrong conceptions of salvation from sin. None can see the glorious light of the cross of Christ until he beholds it rising upon and dispelling the black darkness of sin.

But here an awful thought assails us. We are corrupt. We cannot deny it, but we are not to blame for it; it is not our fault. God made us so.

If this is true it shrouds us in absolute despair. If our corruption comes from God then He must be corrupt since He is the source of it; then He neither can nor will lift us out of our corruption nor rescue us from black wickedness and despair.



Sometimes we are repelled by the thought of the absolute holiness of God—we think that he should be something as we are, but when we reflect we recognize that the only hope of us sinful men is in an absolutely holy God.

This brings us to consider the source of our sinfulness. The Catechism questions whence proceeds the depravity of human nature.

Here our own experience and the history of the race give little answer.

When each of us became conscious of our own existence we became conscious of being sinful, of belonging to a sinful race.

When we go back as far as possible in history beyond written history, with traditions and legends we see plain evidence that mankind was even then a sinful race. As far as we can trace the stream back it is a corrupt stream; but we cannot reach the source.

Some learned men have held the theory that the race of men came from several heads or sources, was evolved in different climes. But the difference everywhere found between the lowest man and the highest animal, in the sense of right and wrong in the aspirations and motives above the intellectual seems to confute such theories. The theory arising from such origins of the advance secured by effort and education is also confuted by the failure to attain in any single instance, to this perfection as described by the ideal of God's law.

Here the Bible gives us our only light. Infidelity ridicules the story of Adam, but even here it manifests its destructive evidence, for it has nothing to take its place, and destroying that it destroys the hope for mankind wrapped up in it. The seriousness of the subject lifts us above the ridicule of infidelity. We simply seek the truth; what is the source of man's sinfulness—a truth of vast importance to us.

The Catechism declares that the disobedience of Adam is the source of man's sinfulness.

Let us try to understand the fall of Adam into sin, the results in the race; and the hopes of mankind involved in it; for we must remember that it is not a single incident, isolated by itself as told in the Bible, that it runs through the whole Scripture, and is linked with the salvation wrought by Christ. We find it so in the text of this morning, let us recall it. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Three things are clearly seen in the Bible teaching. The first is that God created Adam as the head of the race of mankind. How he created him is not stated, but it is stated that though made of the earth, he was made in the likeness of God and later texts of Scripture show this likeness was in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, that he had a spiritual nature capable of and prone through likeness of God to eternal righteousness.

Some think God created man by a command instantaneously fulfilled; but there is no sign in all the universe of like creation; others think it was by a long process of evolution. We should always remember that evolution does not account for origins—only for development of that already existing. There is all the place for it in the first chapter of Genesis that man by his research has found for it in nature; in both there is need of God as the origin. Evolution unfolds in multitude forms the material universe, but God is its origin. It unfolds in multiple forms vegetable life—but God is its origin. It unfolds in multiple forms animal life, but God is its origin. Man may have come from the highest animal by evolution, but there is a life in him and distinct from animal life. God is its origin. Evolution unfolds in multitude forms and associations this man life, but God is its origin. The successive generations in mankind are from Adam, the head of the race—in all ages, in all climes, in vast variety, the one race of mankind.

The one strong fact stated in the Scripture is that God created Adam in his own likeness, a spiritual being prone to righteousness. God is not the source of man's sinfulness. He made man upright.

But we have already been forced to the conclusion that the race is sinful. Whence then is this sinfulness.

The second thing clearly seen in the Bible is that Adam was placed under the law of our

being by God, that he was tempted and that he broke the law by wilful disobedience and so became sinful. A moral being is one free to act not being in any way coerced by outward force. Being so free he may choose either the right or the wrong. Adam could have chosen to love God supremely, he would have then obeyed the command given him and have been confirmed in the spirit of obedience, but being a free moral being, he could choose what seemed of advantage to him, could cease to love God supremely and so disobey his command.

The fruit of the tree of good and evil seems a little thing, still it was the symbol of God's authority. In our Civil War, General Dix at New Orleans said, "If any man hauls down the American Flag, shoot him on the spot." It was a little thing—a flag—but it was the symbol of the nation's authority.

As far as we know—as far as we are able to think, a finite moral being must have this freedom. It may be confirmed in character by repeated acts either of obedience or of disobedience. Adam was such a moral being—yielded into temptation and fell into sin.

Our own temptations are pictured to us in those of Adam. We fall in the same way. We choose what seems for our good and find it evil, because we transgress God's good law and disobey Him.

The third thing clearly seen in the Bible is that Adam is regarded and treated as the Head,

the Representative of the race—and as giving his character to the race. Both of Representation and of Heredity we find a great deal in the experience of the race. As representative we find those represented share the results of the actions of the one who represents them, and generally they confirm by their approval his acts. So the head of a nation to the world, so the ambassador of a nation to another nation—so the representative of a district in the State Legislature or the Congress, so the father of a group of children, so a husband of a wife—so in the varied relations of life. And so in our varied relation to Adam. He represented us; we share in the results of his acts, especially as we generally approve of his acts by our own like action.

Heredity also prevails in human life—and in many cases shows us how the traits of a representative are handed down in his descendants.

Let us remember also that not only is the sinfulness of our nature traced to Adam's fall—but also the nobility comes from him. The many good traits and the discontent with our evil propensities we have this morning been considering are descended from him. The likeness of God in Adam has not been effaced, only blurred. We have it in our nature from him.

Let us also remember that the law of representation and inheritance is a good law coming from the good God, its law giver.

Whatever of injury has come upon us has been from disobedience to God. What untold blessings

have come from even its partial obedience can be traced in the blessings of our advancing Christian civilization.

Let us also remember that this law of representation carries in its bosom the wonderful love of God in the great salvation wrought for us by his son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

He becomes our great representative and we can by faith receive his great salvation and grow like him.

There was a great nobility in Adam created in the likeness of God and representing the race but he fell by yielding to temptation and ceasing to love God supremely.

There is infinite nobility and dignity in Jesus Christ, the son of God and representing the race—He resisted all temptation—He loved God supremely—He loved man so He died for him; and He freely calls upon us all to share His redemption and fullness of life.

Now behold the greatness of His redemptive law and redeeming love. If a single one of us is finally lost, is swept away from God into wickedness and death it will not be because we are in Adam but because we refuse to be in Christ.

Christ has followed us in His yearning love; He calls us to himself in full and free salvation from all sin. Let us yield ourselves to His attraction and come back into the orbit of light and life, the supreme love of God.

#### IV.

### FOURTH LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### “DESERT OF SIN”

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hinder the truth in unrighteousness.—ROM. 1:18.*

OUR Catechism now holds before our serious attention the justice of God in the punishment of sin. We have looked upon ourselves as breaking the law of our being and as members of a sinful race. Now we ask our hushed and trembling hearts, How does God look upon us? Is there such a thing as wrath in God? Surely not the causeless flying into anger we so often find in ourselves. But we sometimes have righteous indignation against wrong doing; we expect that and admire it often in a Judge in Court as he sentences a hardened criminal. Is there such a thing in God, and is it ever aroused against man, against us! Is there a constant and steadfast opposition to sin in the very nature of God. And is it aroused against us? Is there such a thing as justice in God? Does he ever punish sin in this life. Does sin now under the government of a just God ever bring suffering upon us sinners. Will sin under



the government of a just God have anything to do with the final destiny of us sinners.

These are questions that must arise in thoughtful minds. If the justice of God punishes sin in time and in eternity it is far from wise for us to blind our eyes to it. On the contrary it is the part of manliness to find the truth, and to look at it clearly now while we may do it calmly and thoroughly, while we have health of body and vigor of mind and time given us to take the action prudence may demand.

That we may consider this all important subject solely in its bearing upon ourselves, we should now exercise a proper sympathy for our fellow-men; think of others for a while that we at length may think only of ourselves. That a multitude of our fellows should be in danger of present and endless woe must fill every sensitive mind with deep sorrow. This serious distress of our minds is not sinful but good, it allies us with our Savior who wept over Jerusalem. We think of three great classes of our fellow-men. Those dying in infancy. They have a sinful nature. Are they lost? No. No. They are saved in Christ. The whole tenor of the Scriptures emphasizes Christ's words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, of such is the kingdom of heaven." Not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. They are lost in Adam. True! But they are saved in Christ.



The heathen who have never heard of a Savior. Punishment by a just God will be graded according to knowledge of the law. Those who know not this law and still demand stripes, Christ said, "would be beaten with few stripes." The Apostle Paul says they will be judged according to their deeds under the law they knew. Our sympathy for the heathen should lead us to send the Gospel of Christ to them.

The third great class embraces those who in our own Christian land have been shut out by vicious surroundings from all Christian influences. There are hells we know, here in our land, dens of iniquity, vice and misery, from whence those who once enter seldom return. You would not see one dear to you enter to abide there. Our sympathy for those in such hells should lead us to every effort to rescue them and to close such hells. This was in Christ's mission and should be in ours. Of all these classes we may be sure whatever the Great Father, whatever the blessed Savior can do to save men from endless woe will be done for them as is being done for us. We may therefore leave them in God's hands.

Now let us be sure our sympathy for others has only this wholesome influence upon us—to lead us to help them. Let us guard against its withdrawing our attention in the smallest degree from our own condition in the sight of the justice of God. It is so natural for us to judge others and excuse ourselves, to hide ourselves behind

others, that there is special need for us now to think only of ourselves as standing before the bar of the Just God. Let us however much pain and anxiety it may cause find out how we stand in reference to the punishment of sin. If we are in danger of it we ought to know it.

A very fair and difficult question now arises. In what sense and to what degree are we accountable for a sinful nature which we have without any choice of our own; for we are prone to disobey the law of love. This is the original sin spoken of in the Catechism. We are personally not guilty of Adam's sin; but we have his nature inherited from our representative, our head. How are we responsible for such sinful nature? Let us consider a case we frequently meet, upon which the moral judgment of mankind is very clear and which though special throws such light upon our general condition.

A man inherits from a long line of ancestry a fiery temper. He is easily thrown into a hot rage in which he speaks and acts disgracefully.

What does his own and the moral sense of mankind say of him. Three things—

FIRST: No mode of reasoning can lead him or his fellows to pronounce that that fiery nature is right and should be approved. It must be condemned.

SECOND: HE should restrain and as far as persistent and steady effort may go he should so control it that he is the complete master of it. He should embrace all agencies to secure this control.

THIRD: If he pursues the reverse course, and his fiery temper issues in some outrageous act, his moral sense and that of mankind hold him responsible both for the temper and the act.

Do not all these things hold true of us all in our general condition, a nature prone to disobey the law of God, the law of our being.

No mode of reasoning can approve of our sinful nature. We should embrace all agencies at hand to restrain our sinfulness. *Failing* in this when we commit acts of sin does not our conscience condemn us both for the nature and the act.

Surely we cannot even desire that God would lower his law to our condition, would require us to love Him only after we had loved ourselves supremely, with the poor little remnant of our power to love. That would give up forever the noble purpose for which He made us. Besides, as long as God is good, worthy of highest love—and as long as man is his creature having power to love, as long as God is God and man is man created in His image, so long the only right thing conceivable is for man to love God.

The law is the transcript of the Divine Nature, it defines man's nature and is calculated to promote his highest welfare, to change it to meet man's sinfulness would be unjust both to God and man.

Our Catechism is evidently right in saying that God does no injustice to man in requiring him to keep the law, since he has lost his power

of keeping it by his own act. The most unjust thing to man would be to encourage him in his sin.

The race of men universally and constantly breaks the law of our being, you and I constantly break this law. Still it remains true that God is infinitely worthy of our love and the obligation rests upon us to love Him with all our heart.

Our sinfulness is our unjustifiable refusal to do what we ought to do. We are not coerced to sin. No force outside us controls us. Alas all is within us! it is our nature. It approves and indulges itself.

We now face the justice of God in the punishment of sin.

If a man approves and indulges this sinful nature and neglects or rejects the means provided by God to restrain and overcome it, will God punish him in this life? If a man leaves this world in such antagonism with God and rejecting His Grace, will God punish him in the world to come? And will the punishment continue as long as the sin continues? Let us each one make the question personal. Will God punish me?

We may think of punishment as suffering brought upon one for disobedience to law inflicted by one who has the right to enforce the law. The law has a penalty which is inflicted upon the violator of law by the Judge appointed by the law. Justice is aimed at it in every case but it may be very difficult in human laws to secure

it and often the penalty is absurdly different from the offence. Still man in society tries self-government, and recognizes that the penalty is an essential in law; that society to be at all secure must frown upon those who violate the laws of its well being.

Is there such a thing as penalty for the violation of God's law, have we incurred it? Will He inflict it? If so, we may be sure He is not limited as we are, the penalty will be something suitable to the offence and the infliction of it will be sure.

We should now look fearlessly upon the fact that God punishes disobedience to law. In the first place nature shows it very plainly. We are living our earthly life under the reign of law, every instant of our life, and every part of one's life is under law. Now, these laws of nature have penalties and these are self-inflicting. We are under physical law, the law of gravitation, for instance, holds us lovingly to the bosom of the earth for our well-being. But if one breaks this law, if he falls from the top of a skyscraper to the street, he is broken to pieces. Sternly, relentlessly but never malignantly nature visits disobedience with punishment. We are under laws of health, proper food taken in proper ways ministers to our strength; but poison in large enough quantities, just as surely kills. Sternly, relentlessly, but never malignantly nature visits disobedience with punishment.

We are under mental laws. To pay careful attention to our daily work gives strength of mind for that work, gives knowledge and success; to be careless and thoughtless brings ignorance, inefficiency and failure. Sternly, relentlessly, but never malignantly, nature visits punishment upon disobedience.

So we are under moral laws. To give our hearty allegiance to the truth, to be true to our word, to our promise, makes strong character and secures the confidence of our fellows. To be false, to speak falsehood, to break promises makes weak character and forfeits the confidence of our fellows. Sternly, relentlessly but never malignantly nature visits disobedience with punishment.

So we are under social laws. If one thinks of others, considers their interests, promotes their happiness, acknowledges their rights, he develops a social nature, has the happiness of pleasant associations and the satisfaction of ministering to their welfare. But if he holds himself aloof from his fellows—or selfishly preys upon them, if he seeks only selfish aims, he becomes hard and cold hearted and his fellows turn upon him the cold shoulder. The one has positive happiness in the family, making it a happy family, and so in all the relations of life. The other has only misery and makes misery. Here also sternly, relentlessly but never malignantly nature visits disobedience with punishment. These are a few of nature's many voices

and they all tell us that God's laws have rewards for obedience and punishment for disobedience.

Thus nature confirms what our reason has already made clear. The distinction between right and wrong is unchangeable. Our conscience cannot approve this wrong; cannot approve our own sinful nature and acts; our violation of the law of our being. God, the perfect Being, must from His very nature now and to all eternity approve the right and oppose the wrong. He will reward obedience to His good law. The law involving all others, the law of our being; just as truly He will punish disobedience to this law, and the punishment will exactly suit the offence.

Now when we look at the Scripture the truth is made still more plain.

There is such a thing as not entering, not even seeing the Kingdom of God. There is such a thing as losing one's soul. The Gospel tells us. "He that believeth not the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." The Apostle Paul writes our text. "The righteous indignation of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

Is there punishment beyond death? We know sinfulness tends to fixedness, to confirm itself; we know that sinfulness tends to separate itself from the good and ally itself with the evil. There is a terrible possibility of turning away deliberately from repentance and trust in Christ for new life and going out of this stage of existence into the next with fixedness of sinful character,



to separate from all good and to endless sin—and to endless punishment.

We are not to think of everlasting punishment as inflicted for a single—or for a few sinful acts, or for all such committed in this life. Rather it is inflicted upon our sinful nature as confirmed by long indulgence and sinful acts here and now, and issuing in continued acts of sin in the changed circumstances of another life. As long as the sin lasts, it deserves punishment. If one is everlasting, the other is also. Everlasting sin and everlasting punishment. Everlasting sin enduring everlasting punishment, restrained by such punishment from further growth and held by such punishment as deserving condemnation in the judgment of all who may know of it.

Neither are we to consider the nature and severity of such punishment in the future life as depicted to us by the morbid imagination of some of our fellow-men, men of great genius, great poets though they may be.

We are to remember that both heaven and hell cannot be clearly described to us. Our language is based solely upon our experiences. Gold and jewels are admired by us here in this life. But we are not to think of the heavenly city as having walls and streets of literal jewels and gold. Only the circumstances of the blessed life will be wonderfully rich and attractive. So we are not to think of the literal undying worm and unquenched fire of hell—though Dante and Milton have let their imaginations dwell on such



horrors. We will do well to remember that our Savior in his love and faithfulness to us took experiences we loathe here to warn us that the everlasting punishment of sin was terrible in its nature—not the literal fire and worm—but the outward circumstances, the penalty, will be in keeping with sinfulness confirmed, unrepented of and active still against God and one's fellows.

Surely the only lesson our clear-eyed reason can see is that we should restrain our sinfulness now and should seek new life from God our Savior instantly and earnestly.

Surely he who rejects such restraint—who indulges his sinfulness can expect from the justice of God only suitable suffering both in this life and in the life to come.

V.

FIFTH LORD'S DAY OF THE  
HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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“HELPLESSNESS OF THE SINNER”

*This is the message which we have heard from Him and announce unto you that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*—I JOHN 1:5.

WHEN one is in great bodily danger the instinct of self preservation seeks at once to escape. He is a good and wise friend who warns him against false ways—ways that perhaps involve him in greater danger, and shows him the true way to reach safety.

Our Catechism in the last question of the 4th Lord's Day and in this Lord's Day seeks to act the part of such a good friend. We have been awakened to a sense of our sinfulness and its punishment. We are in danger—and we seek to escape.

Our first instinctive impulse is to cast ourselves upon the mercy of God.

Now the Catechism startles us by saying—There is mercy with God—but his mercy is always in full harmony with the justice that requires the punishment of sin. Our reason at once confirms this view. Mercy can never set law aside, the law of God's nature and of our

own being. To be real mercy it must re-establish the law. We try to apply this in our state laws, and extend mercy to the condemned only where there seems to be good hope of renewed obedience to law. Nature also teaches this to the attentive mind. We are under physical, mental and moral laws, and nature sternly inflicts punishment for the violation of these laws. Just as truly while life lasts, in the lasting of life itself and in the restorative agencies nature sets at work there is mercy. A man has broken the laws of health. He falls short of the buoyancy of health; he suffers sickness. But there are restorative agencies in nature ready for his immediate and wise application. So in mental laws. He has been thoughtless and indifferent and suffers the consequence in ignorance and mental weakness; but still there are stimulating and helpful agencies all about him to arouse him.

So with moral laws—coming close to our present thought. There are two opposite principles—the love of God and the love of self. We break the law of our being and love self instead of God. Where love of God and our fellow-men would bring joy and gladness, love of self brings grasping and misery. Take it for instance, in the family. The selfish man becomes exacting, faultfinding, scolding, cold and hard; but he lives on and his family lives on and other families live on in their varied experiences. He may at length feel all these many influences of God's mercy around him and respond to them. Spared

life and the restorative agencies of nature are the mercy of God in this life. Oh, how great, how varied, how strong. They are restorative, do you see. They do not set aside law; they are in harmony with justice. Supposing one rejects them; fails to apply them. What then! He remains sick, he remains ignorant, he remains selfish. Also he becomes confirmed in all these—and then he dies.

It is the height of improbability that all this will be reversed in the world to come. Nature shows both justice and mercy in this life; visits punishment upon disobedience; starts many restorative forces to the end of life, and nature intimates that the life beyond will not be different either in justice or mercy. God does not change when we die—nor do we. Only the terrible truth faces us. Our disobedience becomes confirmed in our character. So does our rejection of mercy to the end of this life. Death does not change us; only takes us away as he finds us.

When we turn now from our reason and observation of nature to the Scriptures, we find from the time of Moses through all the sacred record the mercy of God is set forth as in full harmony with His justice. He is indeed merciful and gracious but He will in no wise clear the guilty. As in nature, God never interposes a barrier between sin and evil, between cause and effect, and shows mercy only to bring back to full obedience. So in the Scripture His mercy

never exempts from responsibility, never encourages man to imagine he can escape the evil consequences of his sin. God's mercy does not seek to make men comfortable in sin, but morally sound and strong in coming out of sin. It is in full harmony with His justice.

There are great generalizations in the Scriptures—concise, all-embracing descriptions of God's nature. One text says "God is light"; but light is the very opposite of darkness. They are not in harmony—do not and cannot exist together. So God is love. But love always seeks the welfare of its object. It would not be love but hatred to encourage the sinner in his sin; to make light of disobedience to the law of our being. The only true love must run in full harmony with justice. The indulgent love of parents often encourages children in evil ways, to their great injury. It is unwise, not wise, love; cannot be called true love. There can be nothing like this in the true love of God for man. His love always seeks man's restoration to obedience. Here also man may so confirm himself in sin that he resists the love of God seeking to win him from his sin. So man may go out of this life into the world to come still resisting God's love.

When we are thus forced to think of endless sin and endless punishment of sin, we are apt to regard it as a blot on God's fair creation. This is a great mystery, no doubt, and far beyond our solving; but it is only the continuation

of the mystery of the presence of sin now in the universe of God. We have a glimpse of its solution. Man is a moral being, free to choose the right or the wrong. This is his nature. God will not coerce him at all. He will do all He can to influence him, but to force him in his choice is not conceivable. It would not be man's choice at all. So it is possible that man may so confirm himself in sin that he will harden himself against all influence God brings to him—against all justice—against all mercy and love.

We are forced then to ask what is the use of punishment if it does not reform the sinner? We can see, perhaps, three uses—First, it may and does check the sinner's growth in sin. Reason tells us man may develop his powers greatly; but it is only by obedience to the laws of his being. Nature tells us the same story, physical, intellectual, moral development follow the right use of our powers according to the law of our being. The reverse is just as true. And often witnessed in sad cases. A man of fine physical and moral powers, a born leader of men, throws himself into courses of sin and becomes so weak in all his powers that he has to be cared for by his friends. Often the process is long and one of great distress. And it certainly gives an intimation that in the world to come the lengthened and distressful process may end in annihilation; a terrible suggestion that throws little light but only luridness upon the subject.

The second use of punishment is that it checks the contaminating powers of sin. Many are deterred from courses of sin by the fearful fate of those who pursue them. Future punishment is foreseen, and becomes at length real, checks in thoughtful beings the seductive powers of sin.

The third use of punishment is to manifest this inherent evil in disobedience of law to all beings in the wide universe of God who may witness it. Our little earth is a small ball revolving about a small sun—and it teems with life and carries our race of moral beings upon its bosom. There are myriad such suns and larger ones—there may be myriad such earths—there may be myriad races of moral beings. Our sad experience may manifest God's displeasure against sin, the inherent evil in sin, and thus be a terrible and needed warning to untold races of moral beings.

These reasons throw little light, only luridness, upon the subject. I have mentioned them since they enter so widely into recent discussions.

We should keep in mind the great personal interest we have in the subject. Not be distracted by questions of general interest from those of intense, personal interest. Justice may ask, and does ask, "What will be the effect of punishment upon the sinner and upon others?" And we may properly consider it. After all, the question for each one of us of supreme importance to each one, is, what has justice against me? what do I deserve for the violation



of the law of my being? We find terrible descriptions in the Scriptures of the damnation and severity of the punishment of sin. The remarkable thing is that some of the most severe teachings of the Scripture come from the lips of Jesus Christ, the friend of sinners, the Savior. They are the warnings of divine and infinite love—the love that seeks to save from sin. His mission to the earth is a convincing proof of the hideous nature of sin and of its awful consequences. The cross glowing with the saving love is raised against the dark background of human sin and misery.

The punishment of sin is therefore not a question of expediency, the good it may do; not a question of choice, of the will of God, as an arbitrary Ruler who might have willed the reverse. It is an outcome of the divine nature as opposed to sin. The enormity of man's sin deserves God's frown. The infinitely good God cannot look upon it with the least degree of allowance—in time or in eternity.

The difficulty we have in recognizing the hideous nature of our sin arises from two sources. They are both easily recognized. The first is, that we are the beings involved, and it is natural for us to think the best of ourselves. But in our own Courts of Justice, we take but little account of what the culprit thinks of his offence and its desert. The second is, that we judge ourselves by human standards and compare ourselves with each other. There is such a thing



as original sin, not that we are at all guilty of Adam's sin, but we have inherited from the head of the race, a sinful nature. Just as truly there is original goodness. We have inherited from the head of the race fragments of his original nature, in the likeness of God. Men are neither wholly good nor wholly bad. Temperament, race, education, the accidents of life modify both and lead to social standards and a vast variety of character. Soon there come comparisons. Each may say, I am not so bad by such a standard, not as bad as someone else. There is none so bad but there is some good in him; the image of God is not entirely destroyed. So there is none so good but there is some bad in him, which may flame out to the astonishment of all.

But it behooves us to frankly and fully judge ourselves not by human standards, but by the divine—not by social laws, but by the divine law of our being. Not by comparison with other sinners, but by comparison with what we ought to be in God's sight. When we thus look upon ourselves, our virtues, as we may be pleased to call them, are deformed and darkened, and we draw back instinctively from vices of which we recognize we are capable.

We are sinful both by nature and by practice, and we see that God in His nature cannot do less or otherwise than condemn us. Whatever good remains in us from the great head of the race created in the likeness of God, whatever good we find in our present experience and in

our aspirations and ideals, should be held by us open to the appeals and influences of the mercy of God, open to the warnings and the pleadings of the Savior of sinners. The Scriptures ever hold before us the enormity of sin, its distrust of God, its disobedience of God, its dislike of God, its selfishness against our fellow-men—ever hold before us its hideous nature, and the awful punishment it deserves in time and eternity, and so urge upon our acceptance the Savior of sinners.

Now we ask again the question with which we began our morning's meditation. How shall we escape this punishment in time and in eternity? More, how shall we escape that which deserves punishment, present sin and its hideous offspring—endless sin?

The Catechism gives a curt reply to the suggestion: that we may make satisfaction ourselves. It says, "By no means, but on the contrary we daily increase our debt." Still men in all ages have tried to save themselves, and it is certainly wisdom for us to have clear views of the futility of such efforts, lest we think we may be successful in making them. Of course we see the fatuity of thinking of bearing our punishment fully until it is exhausted and we go free. We do not know what a particular act of sin, one single act deserves. Besides, we keep our sinful nature and continue particular acts indefinitely.

The curt answer of the Catechism is clearly the truth. But men in all ages have tried

penance. They have withdrawn from the world in deserts and cells—have starved themselves—have inflicted stripes and tortures upon themselves. But we recognize clearly that no one has the right to withdraw from the world. His duty is to help his fellow-men—no one has the right to inflict suffering upon himself, he is not the judge of what he deserves; he cannot please the loving Father by self-inflicted pains and torture.

But men have always relied upon repentance—sorrow for sin and turning from that particular sin. This truly is an unquestionable duty, in every soul awakened to a sense of sin. But each one recognizes its futility in any particular case. It does not restore to the original condition—it does not mete out the exact justice—it only is the conscience seeking relief, and finding none. The sensualist repents of the disgrace and ruin he has brought upon a lovely family, but it does not restore peace and honor to the family, nor give peace to his conscience. An honored banker died suddenly at his desk the other day. He had had time to take a curl of hair from a secret drawer in his desk and he held it to his lips—the curl of the girl he had ruined in his youth and who had killed herself long ago. Besides repentance is not only sorrow and restitution, it is turning from the sin. It is easy to see how difficult it is in some particular cases—and how utterly impossible it is in the case of our sinful nature. This may seem weak and

dormant, but it is still there and strong. Let God check some cherished plan or man try to defeat our earnest purpose, and it flames up in hatred of God and man. No man has rid himself of it.

Then men in all ages have relied upon doing what may be called extra good works—but we easily see the futility of such an idea. It is not a question of outward acts, but of inward nature. The law requires such an inward nature that it will control all outward acts. There can be no extra good works. All good works are already embraced in the law of our being. All self-sacrifice or self-devotion is embraced already in the law. “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,” says the Apostle Paul, “and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.” It is possible for a very bad man morally, a sensualist, an infidel, to be a patriot, even to die on the field of battle for his country in this just cause, but even this supreme sacrifice is embraced in his general duty, and certainly cannot atone for his depraved nature and dreadful sinful acts. In our day, as well as in the past, much thought, much effort and vast fortunes have been given for religious and philanthropic work. Much credit is to be bestowed upon the givers, as they have sincerely desired to serve mankind, and much good has been accomplished; but if the givers have thought by such gifts to free themselves from the punishment of sin in acquiring or using fortunes

or of any other sin—or of sin itself, if they have thought of thus bribing God, the Just Judge, to cleanse them from punishment, it is impossible to think of greater folly.

One more hope of escape may arise in some minds. If we cannot save ourselves, will not someone save us? It is a quite natural hope when we think of a single sin—or a single course of sin—and of the wonderful depth and strength of self-sacrificing love. Many a mother would give herself to save her son from ruin—many a loving wife would sacrifice herself for her husband's welfare. There may be some worldly men who have lurking thoughts that it will be better for them in the future life as it undoubtedly is in this life, because of the Christian virtues of good women in close relations with them. But it surely cannot be a serious hope in any thoughtful soul.

The Catechism is frank, faithful and evidently right in its answer. It is a question of a sinful nature, of a whole sinful life, of a breaking the law of our being. No single one of the human race, the most consecrated, saintly mother—the most devoted true wife, the truest best friend, is so exempt or above the claims of the law as to be able to bear the punishment of or for another. And if he or she could be found, God would not inflict on such an one the punishment due to another.

Let us face the conclusion of the matter. We deserve punishment of our sin in breaking the

law of our being. An awful offence, a terrible punishment.

We cannot save ourselves. The various avenues of escape we have thought of, are all closed against us.

We cannot hope for anyone of all the human race to save us. However great the love, however great the virtue, however close the tie, that escape is closed to us. There is only the hope that the human love willing to save by great self-sacrifices which we find in our hearts as a fragment of God's image inherited from Adam, the head of the race, may indicate that such love exists in God in such purity and to such extent that he may sacrifice Himself to save us.

Should there be such love in Him, surely it would be light indeed, it would dispel our darkness.

There is such love in Him. He has given his own well beloved Son to save us—and Jesus Christ has died for us—the Son of God and the Son of man. And the infinite nature of His atoning death and the infinite grace and power of his holy life are sufficient to supply all our need and are freely offered and urged upon us in the Gospel.

It is for us to commit ourselves fully and unreservedly to Him in faith. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be Saved."

## VI.

### SIXTH LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### “THE DIVINE SAVIOUR”

*For there is one God and one mediator  
between God and men, the man Christ  
Jesus.—I TIM. 2:5.*

**A**T the close of our last Meditation on the 5th Lord's Day of the Catechism, we saw a glimmer of light. There is that in human hearts which leads to self-sacrifice for others; if this is a dulled fragment of our nature as God created us in His likeness, then it exists in God's nature in infinite degree and in exercising it with His infinite wisdom He may devise and execute our deliverance from both sin and from its punishment. It was but a glimmer but in this Lord's Day of the Catechism it is seen to be the first ray of the rising sun—the dawn of the full day of our salvation.

It rises upon our darkness. There is no hope in ourselves. We have broken the law of our being. We are so corrupt in our sinfulness that we cannot cast it off. Left to ourselves there can only be everlasting sinfulness—we have so incurred guilt in our sinfulness that we deserve punishment—as long as sin lasts this must last—left to ourselves there can be only the dreadful destiny of everlasting sin and punishment of sin.



Let us now expel from our minds and hearts forever the faintest hope of ever saving ourselves,—and let us look to God to save us.

God's plan of saving man. It is a great subject, the outcome of God's infinite love and wisdom. We will never exhaust it. Never fully comprehend it. May it be the subject of our adoring contemplation throughout the eternity of blessedness and praise.

But we can understand enough of it now to cast ourselves wholly and unreservedly upon God our Savior. All the teaching of the Scripture is to lead us to do this, and the more we grow in our understanding of it, the more we will grow in our appreciation of God's grace to us, grow in our sense of obligation and gratitude to Him. And so his law will be re-established in us.

This Lord's Day of the Catechism tries to set God's salvation before us in concise and clear outline, but not to in any way exhaust it. Rather it leads on to the whole remaining part of the Catechism. It is a text to be enlarged upon and made clear in the text of the Catechism—in the truths of the Apostles Creed, in the Sacraments of our religion, in the duties of the Ten Commandments and in the privileges of the Lord's Prayer.

There is a striking characteristic of human nature with which we are so familiar in daily experience that we seldom pause to think of its wonderful influence upon our welfare. The human race exists in successive generations. Each



generation starts out on an experience entirely new to it, it must mould its own life, depend upon itself largely for its welfare. But just as truly each new generation inherits from the last generation its character, its energy and its attainments, and so largely from all prior generations. When we descend from generals to individuals this characteristic of humanity has vast influences. The child will have to depend largely upon its growing powers for its adult welfare; just as truly the child inherits from parents the prominence of chin, the shape of nose, the color of eye, the character and initiative; and also much of the circumstances of life. There is such a thing as heredity, we cannot tell how strong, and also such a thing as inheritance of property, not only but of standing in society. We have already had a glimpse of how much a mother will do to save a boy—how much a wife will do to help a husband, individual instances of self-sacrificing love awaken often the greatest admiration; but no one has ever estimated, or ever can estimate the amount of self-sacrifice the love of parents makes for children, the amount of effort and thought one generation makes for the coming generation. This is in the very constitution of our nature as social beings, and comes directly from the hand of our creator, is a part of our likeness to Him—the image in which He created us. We speak of Adam as the head of the race of mankind, as such father he represented the race. So in a true sense every father

represents his children, their future depends largely upon his character and acts. So in a true sense every generation represents the next generation, moulds its character by heredity, and makes its welfare largely by inheritance of attainments and conditions. How much would the race advance were not this characteristic shadowed and warped by sin the strongest imagination can but faintly see. How fearfully sin has degraded this characteristic in many a family, and in many a nation until ruin has supplanted welfare we alas know too well. But this characteristic remains and affords our only hope for the welfare of the race.

As we look more closely into the varied relations of human society this characteristic of representation becomes very prominent. It can be traced in wide influence in all stages of advance from savagery through barbarism to civilization. It is very prominent in our own freedom-loving country.

Our district elects a representative to the State Legislature or the National Congress. Our state elects a Governor. Our nation elects a President. The President appoints an Ambassador from our nation to another nation. Now there is one certain principle running through the whole complicated system. The man elected must be a citizen of the district or state. The President must be a citizen of the nation. So the ambassador. It is not only essential he should be a citizen, but very desirable that he should be able

and good. A strong personality for he is to represent a district, a state, a nation. He should be a worthy representative.

For it is further a principle that the act of the representative is to be credited to the represented, in effect they act through him. What kind of laws do we of any district or state want made for our government, let us select wisely our law maker for we will be bound by his act. He acts for us. What kind of relation to other nations, to the world do we want. Let us select wisely our president, for he will represent our great nation of 100,000,000 people—freedom-loving people, prosperous, virtuous people—to the world, and we will be bound by his actions. If we want to be credited with lofty actions, let us select a lofty personality for our representative, for we must be credited with the act of our representative. Thus a person may have vast dignity in himself, be a wise patriot and statesman; we add vast dignity to him when we elect him the President.

Now it is this characteristic of human nature that the Catechism sets before us as it begins to teach us of God's salvation from sin and its terrible punishment.

What does God need toward man? A representative. What does man need toward God? A representative. The Catechism uses a word embracing both truths. There is great need of a mediator, one who will stand between two estranged parties and bring them into accord.

Wonderful parties these, the infinite God and the whole race of mankind; so he must be a wonderful person this mediator.

We have seen how God is estranged from us; how his righteous indignation is aroused against our sinful nature and sinful acts—how this infinite justice must ever inflict punishment while sinful nature and sinful acts last, and that there is no hope in ourselves, or in any of our fellows of passing from under this just indignation.

What kind of a representative do we need to deliver us from this just indignation? The Catechism answers, First: he must be a true man and perfectly righteous. But we have already looked for such a one, and have not been able to find him. Now let us look to God to provide him. He must be a true man. We have broken the law of our being, and have come under the penalty of that law. A representative must not be of another order of being—however great and noble. He could not represent the nation, he must share it with us, must be a fellow-citizen.

He must be perfectly righteous. Must obey this law of our being perfectly. If he should have broken it, he has already dishonored it, and come under its penalty himself. He might as such represent us, but alas too well, he could not do anything beyond what we could do, he could not deliver us, he must then bear the punishment for himself, besides he then could no longer keep the law for he would be corrupt as we are.

Now, supposing such a one could be found a true man who was perfectly righteous, what could he do for us. He is a mere man as we are—a person of great dignity and worth, but he stands only for himself. There is nothing he can do extra to keeping the law—the law requires his whole manhood. If he offered to sacrifice himself for us, he would have no right to do so—all his being belongs to God already, and his suffering punishment for us would be unjust in itself, and not accepted by God.

It requires a greater person than a mere man however noble and great to represent the whole race of mankind, to act for them as a representative in such vast concerns that the race represented may be fully credited with the worth and effect of his acts.

There are two prominent things we need done for us by our representative, and so done that we may be assured that God receives them as if they were done by ourselves—for that is the essence of representation. The first is that the punishment due to our sins should be borne by our representative that there is nothing left for us to bear, that justice is entirely satisfied. The second is that a righteousness under the law of our being complete and perfect in the sight of the great law giver should be secured for us and applied to us—so that the law of our being is fully re-established in our lives with all its blessed effects.

So the next answer of the Catechism clearly sets forth that our mediator—our representative to act fully for us in such a way as to supply all needs must be the very God. In one person he must be a true man perfectly righteous and just as truly he must be God, a personality worthy to represent not a family, not a nationality, but the race of mankind; to represent such a race in such a way as to save both from the punishment and the corruption of sin and to restore to us righteousness and life.

Thus we are brought to the astounding conclusion that no creature of God, no creation of His infinite power can ever represent us—that only God Himself can represent us by assuming our nature, by becoming man, the God-man.

Should such a one be found he will not only represent man to God, but he will just as fully represent God to man. That which is the crying need of our nature a worthy representative meets a response in God's nature for we are created in His likeness. In our feeble way we are searchers for truth, but we so often unduly magnify portions of truth that the whole is distorted.

We sometimes hear the love of God spoken of as if there was no righteous indignation in Him against sin—as if He was only indulgent good nature as we sometimes find in ourselves. But we know there is such a thing as wrath in God, a righteous indignation becoming steadily and flaming forth terribly against sin.

Then we sometimes hear the wrath of God spoken of as if there was no love in Him for the creature He made in His own likeness, as if He was only exacting sternness such as we sometimes find in ourselves. But we know God is love. He always seeks man's welfare. So He cannot indulge him in the sin that would ruin him. God, although He loves man, created in His likeness, is at variance with us because by our sin, we have arrayed His justice against us. How much does He love us. With such a great astonishing love, beyond comprehension, that He provides a representative for us who will satisfy His justice—He becomes our representative Himself—He takes on our nature, suffers our punishment for us—becomes the God-man, our Savior.

Man, although created in the likeness of God, is at variance with Him, is restive under His control, disobeys His law, has more or less enmity in his heart against God. God comes closer to man—takes our nature upon Him—suffers for us the penalty we deserve. He so reveals His love for us to save that He does all possible to remove our distrust and dislike and win back our hearts to Him.

When God becomes man to represent man in all his needs to secure a full supply of blessing for him He in that very act provides a representative of Himself to man to draw him into full allegiance with Himself.

The representative of both parties, having this relationship with both parties becomes a real



mediator, removing estrangement and replacing it with love. The estrangement of God to man exists solely in His just condemnation of man's sin; it is removed by having this justice satisfied. The estrangement of man to God consists solely in his dislike of God, the spirit of disobedience; it is removed by being replaced by the love of God awakened in him by God's love in the mediator.

All we have to do is to trust our representative, to acknowledge him as our representative so that we are in him and his acts are credited to us.

The culmination of God's revelation of Himself to man both in nature and in the Scriptures is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. In all nature and especially in man's nature we see the great power of representation and the principles involved in it and the great results flowing from it. In the Scriptures we see from the first promise of God to fallen man in the Garden of Eden—through the giving of the Law of God on Sinai—through the long history of God's people, through the worship of priests and sacrifices, through their need as voiced in Poetry and Oratory by psalmist and prophet, the culmination reached at length in the fulness of time in Him who is the son of man and the son of God, the Savior of mankind.

The angel Gabriel said to the Virgin Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee,



wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the son of God." From Mary he took his human nature, a man born of a woman—but he was without sin since he was born of God—a divine being. As God created man at first in His own likeness—so this likeness is fully restored in the new man—Jesus Christ. He was tempted in all points like as we are but without sin. Through His whole life, the revelation of God in the sinless man—through His suffering and death on the Cross, His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven, we see His saving love and redeeming power. Our Lord Jesus Christ satisfies the claims of man's reason and the hopes of his heart and his highest possible thought of the nature of God. He is the great mediator. The law of man's being is fully realized in Christ. The King, Lawgiver, the Priest, the Prophet are all fulfilled in Him. As He comes from the great white throne to this dark earth of sin, beams of light from his glorious person break through our gloom with promise, with law written upon our hearts, with ceremony of Temple worship, with song of praise, with exhortation of holy life, with divine help, with aspiration of hope, with loving sacrifice on the cross, with power of the broken tomb, with full acceptance and glorious triumph in the return to the throne in heaven.

If a citizen of our state should take the place of another citizen in suffering the penalty of violated law, we would be astonished at his love

and call it a noble act. If the President of the nation should take the place of a citizen and suffer the penalty of violated law, the whole nation would be astonished at the love and condescension of the splendid act. If a Saint from heaven should do this, the race itself would be filled with wonder.

But none would have the right or power to substitute himself thus to save another.

But the Infinite God takes the place of man His creature, and suffers the just penalty of his sin—as He has the right and the power to do. But who can conceive of the infinite condescension—and the infinite love of this redeeming sacrifice. Let it appeal to our heart's love—break down all opposition to God our Father our Redeemer and bring us to Himself, to the Savior.

The remaining Lord's Days of our Catechism set forth this truth of salvation in Christ fully.

As we close this introduction portion of the Catechism, we have impressed upon us that its faithful consideration should result in a revival of religion. It presents so fully, so clearly, so impressively man's need as a sinner of a Divine Savior that all of us are at once thrown into two classes, and each class may well ask conscience a personal question of vast import.

Those who have not yet sought personal salvation in Christ may each one ask, Do I need Him? You are a sinner in nature and by practice. There is no hope in yourself. You need Christ. There is no hope outside of Him. He is given

you by the love of God, urged upon you by the love of God. Do not resist this appeal. Trust in Him, believe in the Savior.

Those who are saved in Christ should be so impressed by the consideration of the lost condition of man that we should feel the deepest sense of obligation to Christ that He took compassion upon us. And the deepest gratitude to Him for His salvation. He saved us from endless sin, from endless misery. He has given us eternal life in harmony with God, our obligation, our gratitude to Him should fill each soul, should be the spring of all conduct.

The impulse of each saved soul should be to bring that salvation to all needy souls, to show Christ to others, an impulse to persuade all to believe in the Savior.

A revival of religion, holiness, living close to Christ—showing Christ to all needy souls about them—those not yet believers seeing their need and coming to Christ for salvation— may such results follow our consideration of this part of the Catechism.

## VII.

### TWENTY-THIRD LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### “RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH”

*For the showing of his righteousness at this present season that he might himself be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.—ROM. 3:26.*

THERE are some Lord's Days of our Catechism that seem to stand out more strongly and distinctly than their fellows; that may be called red-letter days; this is one of them. It is the summing up of the Apostle's Creed. What is the result of your believing the creed is the question. The answer is astounding. That I am righteous before God. How can this be possible, when all men are sinners by nature and practice? The answer is as distinct and strong—I am righteous in Christ.

Now we turn to our text—and it is a red-letter text in the Epistle to the Romans. It has just been said after a stern indictment of human nature of both Romans and Jews, that no man can be declared righteous before God on his own record and nature, for all have sin. The text then follows with the astounding statement that the righteousness of God is revealed, that He

might be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus; that is that God might be righteous and account as righteous the one who hath faith in Jesus, God reveals his righteousness in Christ, that he may account as righteous the one believing in Christ.

The answer of the Catechism gives us the experience of the believer, and it is in harmony with our text.

In the next answer of the Catechism the believer tells us his condition by nature—describes clearly and fully the righteousness he possesses by the Grace of God, and then he describes the faith by which he becomes righteous before God. Now if any of us have this experience of the believer it will be well for us to review the grounds upon which it is based that it may be strengthened; for it is not only a present possession but one we may expect to carry with us through all the changing scenes of this life and to find fully realized when we enter the presence of Christ at the right hand of God in Heaven. Surely if any of us are conscious that we do not have this experience of the believer it will be well for us to consider its richness and fullness—its desirableness for us—and how we may obtain it.

The believer frankly confesses that his conscience accuses him of having grossly transgressed all the commands of God, that he has kept none of them and that he is still inclined to all evil. Surely the righteous God can never

account as righteous any one on his own record and nature who has such an accusing conscience, provided the accusation is at all true. How is it with ourselves? We know the law of God—the law of our being. Love God with all your mind, and heart, and soul, and strength. Have we never transgressed this law—have we always kept it—are we inclined to keep it? What says the conscience? The law of God says also: love your neighbor as yourself. This is love yourself, as the highly gifted responsible and dependent creature of God—as He would have you love yourself. Then love your neighbor always and in all respects in the same way and to the same extent as you love yourself. Have we never transgressed this law? Have we always kept it, are we inclined to keep it now? What says the conscience?

I am free to confess to you my conscience accuses me. I cannot look it fairly in the face; it frowns upon me. It is well for us to face conscience frankly and fully on this question. We creatures of God on this little ball of the earth are under the reign of law—we cannot even conceive how such creatures can exist under any other condition. The earth itself has obeyed the law of its being—has turned us toward the sun and it is day. We have obeyed the law of our physical being—have slept during the night; have breathed the air, have taken food, have exercised our powers and have gathered in this place of worship. We thinking beings are now

obeying the laws of our mental nature, and are considering the subject of vast importance. We moral beings have exercised our moral sense and have discerned the law of our moral being—love God supremely and thy neighbor as thyself. And now we are asking our conscience the judging power of our moral nature to give its verdict upon the whole of our past life and upon our present character under this law. What says each conscience? Does our conscience commend us as righteous, or condemn us as unrighteous? Let us hold that single question before conscience—are we righteous—or unrighteous? What is the verdict?

Let us avoid the various refuges guilty beings are prone to devise. Let us not try to excuse ourselves or to indulge the hope of bettering ourselves, or to think we can sacrifice ourselves or our possessions in any way or degree to right the wrongs of our record or of our present condition. Does conscience commend us as keeping the law of God, the highest and final law of our nature as moral beings? Does conscience condemn us as having transgressed this law and as prone to transgress it? What is its verdict? Clear, distinct, final it says, you are unrighteous. Having listened to conscience we may now take the case to a higher court. We may appeal to the bar of God, to the Judge of all the earth, to the great white Throne of Righteousness.

We are liable at any moment to be called to the Bar of God, we have no claim upon a single



hour of our life. It is surely the most important object man can desire, to be pronounced righteous by God—and it is the most terrible thing man can dread, to be pronounced unrighteous by God. Let us in our thought anticipate our standing in the light streaming from the great white throne of righteousness. That light searches all our record—that light searches all our character. If conscience condemns us as unrighteous, surely God sees more clearly and fully than conscience and is more righteous than ever the most aroused and quickened conscience can possibly be—surely God condemns us as unrighteous. We may regard our conscience as having awakened to a clear and stern view of our record and character—to have condemned us as unrighteous—to have arrested us and to have brought us before the bar of the righteous God that we may know our true condition in His sight. And the result is terrible—we are condemned as unrighteous. Looking upon our real condition, upon our record and character, it is absolutely impossible that the conscience, that God himself can pronounce any other verdict. It is absolutely true. We, all of us, are in ourselves unrighteous, and there is absolutely no hope, no prospect in ourselves of our ever becoming righteous. No hope that we can ever change the record of our past; no hope that we can reverse our present character; no hope that God can ever say of any single one of us—he has obeyed fully the law of his being—he now



obeys fully the law of his being—no hope that a single one of us can ever say that of himself—or of herself. No hope that any one can ever say I always love God supremely and I love always my neighbor as myself—that is my record, that is my character, that is my assured status. No hope of pronouncing ourselves righteous, no hope of God pronouncing us righteous. It is well for us to clearly and fully face this truth.

Now it is possible that facing it may seem to some to drive us to recklessness and despair. That surely would be the height of folly. We all recognize that while we seek absolute good, we are not as bad as we can be, that there is a large element of relative good still in us, for our moral sense can discern the perfection of the law of our being, can approve it and can desire to keep it. To become reckless would be to cast away all good in ourselves. Besides it is quite evident God has not cast us away—He still holds the law of our being before us, He has not lowered it to our conditions; He does not thus indulge us in sin. True there is much distress and misery in our present condition—and much of it we can easily trace to our breaking the law of love to God and man—we may regard it as the penalty of violated law, the frown of the law giver. There is also much good and happiness in our lot—much of it we can trace to the partial keeping of the law of love—and we may regard it as mercy of God. Surely God has not banished us from his presence.

While there is no hope in our record and character, that we or God can regard us as righteous, there is still hope that God may so reveal His righteousness greater than our highest thought, that He may make us righteous. He has not lowered the law of our being—He has not removed his goodness from us. Nature within us and nature without us bid us not to be reckless, not to despair. There is much in nature to lead us to fear that God may at length banish us from Himself, the source of all good, but there is also much in nature to lead us to hope that God will save us from our hopeless condition through His great righteousness.

Let us listen to this teaching of nature concerning God the revelation of Himself in nature. There are three great truths of nature we all accept but whose importance in all their bearings it is hard for us to realize—First, we are reasoning beings—this is one of our distinguishing characteristics. It is a wise couplet

“The one who will not reason is a bigot

“The one who dares not reason is a slave.”

God always honors man as a reasoning being. It is the general trend and calling of the Scriptures. He says to us all, “Come let us reason together”—and He says it on this very subject we are considering—“Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow.”

Let us seek to be brave, fair reasoners on this most important subject—even reasoners with God.

The second great truth of nature is we are responsible beings. As reasoning, responsible beings we make laws—the conventions of society for the easy, safe and pleasant living of its members—and the laws of cities, states, and nations; but we recognize that from insufficient knowledge and wrong ideals and motives, some of our laws may be defective. As we thus reason with God we can conceive that His laws are perfect, from His full knowledge and pure motives.

Now we not only make laws, we administer them. We have public opinions of societies, we have mayors, governors, presidents. But here also from defective knowledge, wrong ideals, and wrong motives one administering law often is unequal and unjust. As we reason with God we conceive that His administering His laws from His full knowledge and pure motives is beyond our highest ideals—is absolutely perfect.

Now we not only make and administer law but we have Judges and Juries—a judicial element to pronounce upon facts as to violations of our laws and to pronounce suitable penalties. Here also we recognize that from insufficient knowledge and wrong feelings, it is difficult for us to get at the facts and more difficult still to award just penalties. As we are reasoning with God we see from our defects how far short we fall of His perfectness, that as Judge He knows fully and feels rightly and judges justly.

The third great truth of nature throws great light on our subject. In all our doings as reason-

able, responsible beings with reference to making and enforcing law there is a principle involved which seems necessary and whose bearings in all directions it is hard for us to realize. It is hard to cover it with a single word for the word we use is so common that it has lost some of its greatness—the principle itself is so familiar that we do not recognize at once its greatness, it is Representation. In making laws we have our representatives in the legislature; in administering laws our representative is governor or president. In the courts of law our representatives are jurors and judges. The people act by our representatives. They act in our stead. We are honored by their action. This seems essential in human nature. It runs through many of our most familiar and important relations of life—family—business—social as well as legal. In this principle of representation there are two elements difficult to name because of their greatness and familiarity in our lives—these are Substitution and Suretyship. The president is in a deep real sense our Substitute. We are in a deep real sense his Sureties. Our president acts in our stead. We are sureties for him that his acts will be effective. So our legislative and judicial representatives act in our stead and we are sureties to make their act effective—so in the family—parents and children—in business, in contracts, in employment, in society, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, high and low; as well as in legal relations, representation

prevails with its two elements, substitution and suretyship. So we, reasoning, responsible beings, are reasoning with our God as He calls us to do, our nature itself begins to give us a glimmer of hope, that suretyship and substitution so prominent in our nature may be a faint reflection of the perfect character of God. That representation so prominent in our lives but so hampered by our lack of knowledge and by our impure ideals and motives may live more prominent even in the nature of our God and find an exercise toward us made perfect by the infinite knowledge, wisdom, resources and purity of God.

Of course suretyship and substitution have different degrees and values among us. Sometimes they affect only property and reputation. Sometimes they affect life itself. A father pays the debts of a wayward son and gives him a new start; a mother nurses her boy diseased by sinful ways back to health and virtue, wearing out her own life. There have been cases where substitution has been allowed in war. A man was drafted; he must leave his wife and children and go into the army. But a friend takes his place and dies in battle in his stead. Napoleon is said to have visited the tent of a favorite officer and he found him in a troubled sleep, while on his table was a list of his debts so overwhelming that he had written under it the words: "Whoever can, whoever will, pay these debts." The Emperor simply wrote under these words his name: "Napoleon." When the officer

awoke and saw that name his troubles all vanished away—and the loyalty to the Emperor was doubled.

Charles Dickens often strikes deep chords in human nature. In the "Tale of Two Cities." The English lawyer Carlton strongly resembled the French Aristocrat Darney—he takes his place in prison in Paris—Darney with his wife and children escape to London. Carlton dies in his stead upon the guillotine. The story is true to nature in that ever after in the saved London home the memory of Carlton is sacred and precious. The story is also true to nature in that Carlton in riding to the guillotine cheers the heart of a young girl riding with him to her death. And so cheers his own heart also by repeating the words of the Great Substitute: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that liveth in Me, though he dies yet shall he live and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." So the whispers of our nature lead to the plain clear words of Scripture. The revelation of God in nature is to the revelation of God in the Gospel as the dawn is to the full shining of the sun at noon-day. Our text says the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel that he might be righteous and account as righteous the one believing in Jesus. Our studies of the Apostle's Creed have taught us something of the glory of the Person and Work of Christ. He reveals God to us, represents God to us as His well beloved Son. So revealing God He takes

upon Himself our nature, becomes a man under the law of our being. As such He represents us to God. He keeps the law of our being perfectly. He deserves all the results of such absolute righteousness; and He is more than man the infinite son of God; there is infinite worth in His absolute sinlessness, His perfect obedience, and He is our representative.

So He suffers for sin, not that He deserves such suffering in the faintest degree. He even dies for sinners, not that He in Himself deserves death at all—He dies as our representative—our substitute—and His suffering and death are of infinite worth since He is the infinite Son of God. Christ Himself says: “The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many.”—and again He says: “My body is broken for you—My blood shed for you for the remission of sins.” Christ Himself says both of His representation of God and of His representation of man in that wonderful saying containing the whole Gospel: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” So the believer says in our Lord’s Day of the Catechism, “In myself I deserve to perish I deserve to perish, but believing in Christ I have eternal life. In myself, my record, my character I am pronounced by my conscience—my God the Judge—unrighteous—I perish—but in Christ, in the perfect satisfaction righteousness and holiness of Christ I am accounted righteous even as if I never had



any sin. Even as if I had fully accomplished all righteousness I am an heir of eternal life God gives me all this not, for any merit of my own, but of His pure grace."

He maintains His holy law, the law of my being—in that He keeps it Himself in the person of His Son and He deserves all the benefits that come from perfect obedience and these He bestowes on me. He inflicts also all the penalty of broken law and bears it all Himself in the person of His Son—that which I deserve He bears for me. Now He accounts me as righteous, freed from all penalty, entitled to all blessedness because I am in my representative. I trust in Christ, I receive by faith the gift of God's grace, Christ is my surety, Christ is my substitute, Christ is my representative—. All that He is, all that He has borne, all that He deserves is mine. I could never claim my title to heaven in myself. But I have a complete and full title to heaven in my representative, the glorious son of God and son of man, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The believer having this blessed experience that he is righteous in Christ, freed from all penalty, entitled to rewards in Christ is careful to disclaim all merit of his own, the merit all belongs to Christ. There is no merit even in the faith that rests in Christ. He simply believes in Christ as revealed in the record of His life on earth and as He now reigns in Heaven—he has some insight into His nature from his own nature



that is capable of considering and acting for others. He has a full trust in Christ acting for him, representing him—and so he is impelled to live in and for Christ—he has all these elements of a saving faith. But there is no merit in faith itself. Its' the hand that receives God's grace, the faith does not merit the salvation. Christ alone saves and He saves all together. We see the north star in the clear heavens and learn a little about it—a blazing sun so distant that light in its rapid flight takes many years to reach us. But our seeing the star is no part of the star, if the clouds hide it, if we shut our eyes, or if we refuse to look toward it the star would still be the same. We look and we simply see it shining upon us. So Christ is the infinite Savior. We look and He shines upon us, we trust and he saves us. The next Lord's Day of the Catechism will tell us about the source and value of our own good works, the renovation of our nature following from Christ redeeming life and death. We will leave that to be considered later.

Now as in thought we anticipate again our standing before the great white throne of the righteous God our conscience is fully satisfied since we do not stand in our own character and record, but in our representative alone. We know God will declare us righteous in Christ, freed from all penalty since He has borne it for us, entitled even to the eternal life in Heaven since He has deserved it for us, righteous in

Christ since we believe in Him. Among the many things the future contains for us of which we can only conjecture there is one thing certain. We shall all stand at last before the great white throne. Whatever courses our lives may take we are all moving steadily toward that throne. Shall we stand there condemned or justified? Condemned surely if we stand in ourselves. Justified surely if we stand in our representative, Christ. Each one of us must stand before that throne someday, we know not how soon. Shall it be only in our own merit, our record, our character, or in Christ? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

## VIII.

### TWENTY-FOURTH LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### “JUSTIFICATION BY AND OF FAITH”

*Ye see that by works a man is justified  
and not only by faith.*—JAMES 2:24.

IT is one of the marvels of language how the change of a little word between two great words brings our thought under a different horizon—almost into a different universe. What little words are by and of—what widely different truths are justification by faith and justification of faith. The Epistle to the Romans is held by many to set forth this first, that of James to set forth the second; but in reality both truths are in all the Epistles as realizing together the whole Gospel.

In the Last Lord's Day of our Catechism we considered justification by faith; in this Lord's Day we are to consider justification of faith.

It is well for us to seek a clear and concise description of both in order to illumine the soul in all the varied experiences of life—and to be fixed in the memory forever. Justification by faith we remember is our being pronounced righteous by God the Judge on account of the righteousness of Christ in whom we have faith.

If we are righteous, then the law of our being has nothing against us. More than that we are entitled to all the rewards of obedience to that law. We saw that this was absolutely impossible on our own record and character. It could only be conceived of as secured to us by a representative of such glorious majesty and such absolute righteousness that the results of His substitution and suretyship could be made ours by the righteous Judge. Character we know cannot be transferred from one person to another, but the results of character and life can be and are so transferred in all the relationships of our lives. Children have the results of the reputation and standing of parents. Citizens are bound by the characteristics and acts of their representatives. From such experiences we can see how the righteous Judge can say of the one having faith in Christ, he is righteous in Christ; he is entitled to all the results of Christ's righteousness.

In himself, he deserves death, the penalty of sin—but Christ has suffered and died for him, has fully satisfied all claims of the law against him, and through His perfect keeping of the law Christ has merited all the rewards of such obedience for him, even of eternal life. When we consider who Christ is, the Son of God given to us of the Father's love—who for love of us became man and lived for us—and suffered and died for us, we begin to see the greatness of our representative, and the infinite worth of His life and death, and that it is of infinite Grace of

God that we have the results of His substitution and suretyship, that nothing of our own can in any way enter into our being pronounced righteous by God the Judge—it is only and solely because we are in Christ our representative and we are in Him only by faith; there is no value in our faith; it is simply receiving Him as our representative. He alone has borne our curse—and has merited our eternal life. Nothing of ours can possibly become a part of our justification. Christ is the representative. His work is complete. He has borne the curse due us. He has given us the title to heaven. We are as if we never sinned, as if we had always been righteous—as if we were now entirely righteous.

God the Judge declares the believer righteous in Christ:

If any one of us seeks to in any way contribute to his own justification he is sure to fail. He will not be able to satisfy his own conscience much less the righteous God. The only righteousness that can stand before the righteous Judge must be perfect—and this alone is in Christ. He is our representative. If any one of us will simply accept God's gracious gift, will simply receive Christ as our representative, then we have the promise of God "Whosoever will may come—and whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

This is justification by faith. God the Judge declares the believer in Christ righteous in Him.

Entitled to all the results of Christ atoning death and perfect life.

Now let us turn to the justification of faith. There is such a thing as a dead faith contrasted with a living faith. James says Faith without works is dead. Faith is justified by works. Years ago one believed the Island of Cuba existed, was rich and beautiful and was struggling for its freedom. The faith enlarged knowledge but worked no change in living, in character. Another believed in the existence of the Island, in all its richness and beauty and became so interested in its struggle for freedom that he left his own land and enlisted in that struggle—that faith worked a change in his manner of life and character. So many believe in God, in Christ the Son of God, in His atoning work even, have an orthodox faith enlarging their knowledge, but it has no effect upon their character—it is without works, it is a dead faith. Others have not only this intellectual faith—may indeed have far less knowledge—but they trust Christ the Savior and follow Him in loving obedience; they have a living faith; their life, their work form a justification of their faith. As they grow in appreciation of Christ they grow in His likeness. Now as the Island of Cuba was the same Island for both kinds of faith so Christ is the same Christ for both kinds, His life and His death are unchanged in their value of our faith.

It is evident that the living faith is no part of the righteousness of Christ, it simply receives

the gift of Christ, trusts Him as our substitute, our representative.

In our human nature there are two things involved in any offered gift—it may be very valuable in itself, but we may even when we recognize its value reject it—or we may accept it. So in our nature there are two things involved in accepting a gift—we despise a man who does not have some little at any rate of both. One is some appreciation of the gift—some desire for it, the other is some gratitude to the giver.

It is so with the gracious gift of Jesus Christ. We may reject Him, even when we see something of His value—or we may accept Him.

When we accept Him as our representative, we must have some little appreciation of Him, some desire for Him. This may be very strong or of less degree—but it must exist. We recognize our need of Him, that we cannot be justified in ourselves, that we are guilty sinners under the condemnation of the law—that only in Him can we be justified. The sense of sin, its power, its guilt varies in degrees and clearness, but is always enough to lead the believer to value Christ as atoning for sin, and as bestowing life. So with gratitude to God, for the gift of Christ, to Christ for His love that led Him to die that we might live, it may vary in degree, but surely we cannot conceive of receiving Christ and having no gratitude to Him.



The more we recognize the glorious gift of God, the more we recognize the glory of our representative, the son of God, the son of Man, become there in the representative of God and of man, revealing God to us, and representing a sinful race to God, the more we recognize the glory of our representative in living for us, in dying for us, the more we must appreciate the gift of righteousness in Him—the more we must have gratitude to Him. The Apostle Paul says, “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and adds, “by whom the world is crucified to me and I unto the world.”

The glory of God shines in creation—the heavens declare His glory. He makes men in His own likeness, but the glory of the Cross excels all else, reveals His holiness and His love for a sinful race to redeem from sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In the Cross His righteousness is revealed and His justice manifested—His holiness shines forth, His love conquers; He takes the sinner’s place, living for him, dying for him—the Glorious Representative.

The Cross becomes the only ground of our justification and so also effectually separates the believer from the power of sin, “the world is crucified unto Him and He unto the world.”

We cannot compare justification by faith and justification of faith, one is a change of condition, the other is a change of character. They always co-exist. We separate the two in our



limited thought; they do not separate in God's thought, they are not separate in reality. Justification by faith is a change of condition, it is instantaneous, it is complete, it is like crossing a line—one instant on this side, the next on the other side.

One instant the man is in himself condemned as a sinner, in his own conscience and in God's sight. The next instant he is justified in Christ in his own conscience, in God's sight. The one instant he stands before conscience, before God in himself, relying on his own record and character. The next instant he stands before conscience, before God, in his representative, relying on Christ's record and character. God the Judge pronounces him in himself unrighteous, and conscience says it is true. God the Judge pronounces him righteous in Christ and conscience says, "by thy grace it is true. I trust in Christ alone. I renounce all other confidence. I trust in my representative."

By this trust by the Grace of God—through the life of Christ a change in character is begun, to grow in various ways throughout this life and to culminate in the life to come—a turning from sin—the worldly principle of living, unto Christ living and likeness. Graciously Christ himself says—"Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come unto him and will sup with him and he with me." Christ does not dwell in a condemned soul—He dwells in a soul He has already re-

deemed, giving the new life of fellowship with Him. The man was condemned to death in himself, in Christ he is awarded eternal life—and Christ dwells within him, the hope of glory. Christ dwells within the believer pronounced righteous before the law—the condition of justification by faith is at once complete. The indwelling Christ purifies from corruption and establishes holiness, His indwelling thus working through the faith accepting Him and grateful to Him a change of character to be completed in His own good way and time.

The Apostle John in his first Epistle shows the relation of Christ to the believer in both respects. He says Christ the sinless one was manifested to take away sin—to take away its guilt, its desert of punishment, to take away its power, its corruption of our nature. He goes on to say particularly of this last relation—"he that sees Christ, that knows Him, that abides in Him, sinneth not." Through all degrees of these three acts of course, but the one who has all three has the direction of his life externally changed, he is turning from sin toward righteousness, toward Christ likeness. It is the last abiding in Christ—that shares his life. We may see Christ as revealed in the Gospels—may even believe in His living today and His presence everywhere—it enlarges our knowledge and stops there. We may even know Christ as so revealed and so present—may have some quality in us that appreciates qualities in Him—as His good-

ness, His self-sacrifices—for it is only in this way that one person knows another—this in highest degree leads to abiding in Him, but if it does not reach such degree it simply adds to our knowledge, and stops there.

If we still are controlled by sin—we show we have only this dead faith. It may be near life, have some promise of life, as John says—“but it is dead, whosoever sinneth hath not seen Christ, neither knoweth Him.” But if the seeing Christ, if the knowing Christ goeth on into abiding in Him—as the branch abideth in the vine, it shares His life. We see Christ, we know Christ personal appreciation of Him, we do more, we trust Him as our Savior, we live in Him.

Christ enters and dwells in the soul—and the soul enters and dwells in Christ. It is a living faith—a vital relationship. Christ by His spirit dwells in us. We by our faith dwell in Him.

Such a vital relation has a large element of mystery in it. Who can understand life in its lowest form? How can we understand it—in its highest form.

Perhaps electricity may afford a vague illustration. Have you ever watched the process of electro-plating? There is a large tank of what seems pure water—it is an acid liquid. In one end of the tank hanging from a wire is a pitcher of dull metal—in the other end hanging also by a wire is a bar of solid silver. Now, these two wires are attached to the opposite poles of an electric battery.

We look at the acid water in the tank—there is no motion—no disturbance. Now look at the dull metal pitcher—it begins to shine more and more until it is a silver pitcher. A mystery of electricity is going on. But after all it does not change the dull metal pitcher, only coats it with silver. The mystery of life is greater, it changes the very nature within; it is no longer controlled by sin but by righteousness.

The only question now is, does it work, or is this only a theory. We know it works. Take the disciples. They were fallible men—made mistakes, were tempted by sin. But at once when these sins were recognized they repented and never again walked in that direction. John, Peter, Paul—would it have been possible to have led either into a known way of sin and to have kept him in that way. We know it would not have been possible. The old principle of living has been replaced by a new one—the Christ life in them. They would live in Christ by faith and so more and more like Christ. It is said of Chrysostom, the golden mouthed orator that an Emperor desired to injure him and called together his wise counsellors to devise a way. One said confiscate his property. No, said the emperor, that will not injure him, but it will injure the poor he is constantly helping. Another said, banish him. No, said the emperor, that will not injure him—for he will make friends wherever he goes and God will be with him. Another wise counsellor said, kill him. No, said the

emperor—that will not injure him—that will send him direct to heaven. Then the wisest of all said, Lead him into a course of sin. Yes, said the emperor, that will injure him. But here they failed, for with all their wisdom they could not devise a way to lead Chrysostom into a course of sin.

It is so today with the true believer in Christ. To the degree in which he abides in Christ he will live like Christ, in the family, in all business relations, in all social relations, in the Church, he will abound in good works. Good works are those prompted and described by God's law, love of God supremely, for one's self as the creature of God and love for our fellow-man of the same kind and degree as love for ourselves. The whole tenor of life is changed, it was against the law, it is now for the law.

Still we cannot think of these good works receiving a reward of their own worth in each believer for two reasons—first, they are not perfect—our sinful nature is being dethroned, but it tinges our best works with imperfection. And in the second place, the credit for our good works belongs solely to Him our Savior who by His Holy Spirit implants His life in us. There are many temptations and trials incident to the life of a believer in Christ and one is sometimes bewildered by their greatness—and that the heaviest may come from belonging to Christ, as Paul in Prison—and at length beheaded.

Where one is justified by faith, pronounced

righteous by the Judge—when one's faith is justified, receiving the new life in Christ, why do not trial and temptation cease, why not be taken out of this sinful world at once to the heaven of blessedness. Two answers at once arise. For the sake of the sinful world. So that Christ's Gospel may be preached by the believer in Christ by the words of persuasion and by the life of commendation.

Another may be dimly seen in the evident fact that many virtues found in highest degree in heaven could never have been formed or cultivated there. It is so even with many virtues and graces of our blessed Lord Himself. Well may the angels desire to look upon the mysteries of His redeeming love for sinners. So with those He has redeemed and gathered around His throne of glory. In heaven there can be no virtue formed by resisting temptation for temptation cannot exist there; there can be no patience in trial for trial cannot enter there—so faith in darkness, long suffering from evil conditions, endurance in adversity. What a host of virtues when we come to think of it can be cultivated only in this sinful world. Let us not murmur at our lot, but rejoice that we are honored with commending the Gospel to a sinful world and that Christ our Lord is faithful to our best interests in the trials He is leading us through to the heavenly life. They may be very severe even to the last, but He loves us too wisely to make them shorter or less trying.

It is said that the Emperor Moth is the most beautiful of all the butterfly family; it has long wings most brilliantly colored. Now the Emperor Moth has a great struggle when it breaks forth from the cocoon stage. You watch it in the struggle and touched with pity you try to help it, with a sharp knife you cut the strong threads—and it comes forth quickly and easily, and flies away. But I thought you said it had large wings—they are small. You said the wings were brilliantly colored—these are dull. Yes, there is the trouble; the wings were to be developed in size and their fine colors were to be brought out by the great struggle in breaking forth from the cocoon. You were not wise for by your pity in freeing the poor worm from the struggle, you have spoiled the whole life of the butterfly. We may pray in all our struggles for strength, even for relief if you will but it should be in the faith of Christ. “Thy Will be done”—as He prayed in His great trial—and so became the triumphant Savior.

Christ’s sympathy for us will we are sure be wise as well as kind. He designs the very best for each one of us in the heavenly and eternal life.

When we reach heaven at last, when we awake in His likeness, we will ascribe to Him all the praise. He died for us. He lived for us. He lived in us—He brought us to heaven. All the praise—all the glory belongs to Him. Not with



us. Not unto us. Not unto us, but unto the God of our salvation be all the praise.

Trial and temptation do not cease, it is through meeting these in the spirit of Christ that the Christian virtues are developed—grow not only for the Heavenly life and service as well for the advancing the kingdom of heaven on the earth. To be a Christian is not only to be justified by God as in Christ but being in Christ as the source of new life to live like Christ. The justification by faith results in the justification of faith—in God's sight—in the sight of conscience, in man's sight. The Christian to the degree of his faith in Christ lives in his home as Christ would live. If he is an employer of labor he treats the laborer as Christ would treat him. If he is an employee, he treats his work as Christ would do. If he is a member of the Board of Directors of a great corporation, his influence is Christlike, to the degree of his faith in Christ. If he is in political office or management—he to the degree of his faith is Christlike. So at large the Christian Church to the degree of its faith is like Christ in doing good to the community and to the world. So civilization is Christian only to the extent of its living like Christ, that virtually is the extent of the influence on public opinion of true believers who live like Christ.



## IX.

### TWENTY-FIFTH LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### “SOURCE OF FAITH”

*By grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It's the gift of God not of works that no man should glory.—EPH. 2:8, 9.*

IN our studies of the Apostle's Creed, we have already paid some attention to the articles concerning the Church and the Communion of Saints. This, and several following Lord's Days of our Catechism treat with greater elaboration of the life, the methods and the aims of the Christian Church. When Christ said: “Upon this rock I will build my Church,” we understand He referred to the confession of faith in Him, as the Christ, the Son of God. It is quite true to our human nature that those having such a faith should group themselves together in a special organization. Christ, the object of this faith, who thus groups believers together and is their head, has given His Church two significant rites: Baptism, the rite of entrance—and The Lord's Supper, the rite of maintenance. He has also prescribed certain principles for the government of the Church and has given His Church a

special work to do in the world. It is of these subjects, these few Lord's Days of the Catechism treat with some elaboration. Of Faith in its source—of the nature and use of the Sacraments—of the government of the Church and of the spirit of grateful life service.

The Epistle to the Ephesians may well be called the Epistle of the glory of the Church of Christ. It shows that God has exalted Christ to be the Head of the Church—and the Ephesians who were without God in the world are now of the household of God and are growing into a holy temple for the habitation of God by the Spirit. They were dead in trespasses and thus they were afar off and had no hope. Now they are made nigh in the blood of Christ. God hath raised them up and made them sit in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus. God shows in the years to come the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward Paul, the writer, toward the Ephesians, towards us in this far off land and age, in Christ Jesus.

Paul speaks to his and to their experience and to our's as well when he uses the text, "By grace have ye been saved through faith—and that not of yourselves, the Gift of God." We thus can easily see the glory of the Church is being saved by grace and showing this grace to all the ages—saved by grace and proclaiming to the world salvation by the grace of God in Christ.

Our Lord's Day of the Catechism has taught the spirit of the text. Whence is the faith that

makes us partakers of Christ's salvation, it asks—and this answer is prompt and clear: "The Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel and confirms it by the use of the Sacraments." The text says salvation is by grace through faith, the gift of God—and the Catechism shows how the Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts.

Our natural pride of heart is apt to exaggerate and misconstrue the statement of the Scripture, "that faith is the gift of God" into the conclusion that faith is a new power of the soul that others do not have and that this new power separating a few from the whole race of mankind, is given to the selected few by the sovereign choice of God.

The Catechism guards us against this spiritual pride by showing how the Holy Ghost works faith in us by the preaching of the Gospel and the use of the Sacraments. The nature and use of the Sacraments are so fully treated in the next Lord's Days that we need only to glance at them now. Christ, the head of the Church, instituted them. He selected the most simple things known among men—washing with water and eating bread. He made these significant of washing the spiritual nature, the soul, and feeding the soul with Himself. He associated with these simple acts His promise of full salvation. As the Catechism teaches, "by the use of these He more fully declares and seals to us the promise of the Gospel." The whole idea of Christ seems to make

clear and sure by the most simply acts His saving grace as received and applied to the needy soul. Again the natural pride of the human heart has clustered around these simple rites of initiation into the Christian Church and especially of the maintenance of the Christian life a number of mysteries and even magical influences calculated to centre faith in them as channels of the sovereign choice and powers of God. Even the word "Sacrament" we use concerning them is of our own selection and has some meanings evidently foreign to the simple teachings of our Lord.

Leaving the further consideration of the Sacraments to the coming Lord's Days, let us now consider "Faith as the gift of God," and how the Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts—how we are saved by grace, and what is the purpose of the Christian Church; the mission Christ has given His Church to do in the world.

If you ask, "How did these Ephesians become Christians?" the answer is, "The Gospel was preached to them." Christ had lived and died in Judea. He rose from the dead and was living at the right hand of God, His work of salvation fully accepted. Men believing this Gospel had traveled as far as Ephesus and there preached it to all whom they could reach, and they lived it before men. Some who heard had been so impressed by the message and the life of the believers, that they, too, believed, and these believers formed the Church at Ephesus—they

were grouped together by this belief, and they used the Sacraments to make more clear and more sure their belief in Christ.

But there were some in Ephesus who did not hear the preaching of the gospel, and there were some who heard so carelessly or with such opposition that they did not believe in Christ. With reference to the first class, the fact that they did not hear is to be attributed to the providence of God in the use of means, that is it is due to the small number comparatively of the believers preaching the Gospel and to their inability or inefficiency to preach to all the Ephesians. With reference to the second class, those who hearing and from carelessness or opposition did not believe, was that to be attributed to the sovereignty of God in not bestowing upon these the gift of faith—was it because they could not believe—were destitute of the power of faith? Did those who believed have a new power given them by the sovereign choice of God, and did they believe from that reason that they could, had the power to believe, while the others had no such power and so could not believe?

The asking of this question of those living in that far off place and age makes the question itself very clear; but the conditions are exactly the same today with us in this Christian land—and in heathen lands. Only with reference to the answer to be given to it, we have a more full understanding of the nature and character of God and of the special work of the Holy Ghost

from the whole Bible and from the history of the Church and of the world from Bible times—and also we have a large and more intimate knowledge of nature itself and especially of our own spiritual nature. As we ask the question of the Ephesians, they give no answer. As we ask the question of the Bible and of ourselves, the answer becomes quite clear.

Man as man, the creature of God, has the power of faith. However weak or depraved the living man may be, he has the power of faith in its four essential elements—he believes in the existence of anything on sufficient evidence; he has an insight in qualities found in persons and so believes in them; he has the power of trusting his interests in the hands of persons and so has faith in them—he has the power of directing his life to persons and causes by his faith in them. We have already in this Lord's Day, treating of the "I believe in" of the Apostle's Creed, considered these powers of faith. Whenever a being in the form of man is found without this power of faith, in any single one of its four elements, we count him as demented; as mentally and morally deficient.

If we ask further, is there essential difference in this faith, as it is directed toward man or toward God, we must recognize that it is only in the matter of direction and that this is only in the matter of degree. There may be aversion to believe, to insight, to trust, to a principle of action toward man, and this may exist also

toward God. But a man's aversion to a thing or a person does not destroy his freedom of choice. A patient may be horribly averse to a physician and to the medicines he prescribes, yet he may trust him and take it or not, as he pleases, and his life may depend on his choice. Faith is always the act of a man. Of its essence it must be voluntary. God does not believe for us. The Holy Ghost does not force us to believe: that would not be our act at all, it would be His alone.

The text says, "Faith is the gift of God." The Catechism says the Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts. When we ask the question, "How does God work?" we recognize the question is essential to our mental life; that we would not be thinking beings if we did not ask it. And we also recognize that we are learners under the Great Teacher, children at school, and that He is pleased when we learn of Him. Surely we are being taught by God himself when we look out upon nature about us—when we look into our own natures, and when we try to read aright the teachings of Prophets and Apostles, and especially when we listen to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We live in a day when science has discovered many truths in nature and when it is now intently studying the powers of the soul of man. It asks this question of origin. It has studied the material universe—the mineral kingdom, and it goes back through the various phenomenal



elements to the atom—farther back still to the constituents of the atom of each element, the positive electron of its nucleus around which revolves the negative electrons. These various electrons resist and attract, repel and combine, they have the power we call force, which rules in the sweep of the constellations of blazing suns and in the formation of our earth and its movements about our little sun. Whence the atom and its wonderful powers and laws? We ask, and science can only answer—God. We look out upon the earth covered with vegetation and teeming with life in waters, and air and on land. Whence this life, of lowest order, of ascending grades? We ask and science can only answer—God. We have investigated thoroughly. We find it does not come from dead matter—plant life only comes from a seed—animal life only comes from animal life. We go back and back and back. Life only comes from the Life Giver—the God who made the atom—He also made the plant and the animal.

Now we come to ourselves: beings who have intellect, who can read the thoughts of God in nature, beings who have personality with all its wonderful powers and kinships, who can think and feel and choose—who are moral persons knowing the distinctions of right and wrong, and having a choice of one or the other. Whence this being? We ask—science answers from God, the Person, not from the Material Atom, not from the senseless vegetations, not from the imper-



sonal, unmoral animal—Man can only come from God. So this highly gifted being, the being having faith, believing on evidence, having insight of personal qualities, trusting persons, controlling himself by faith, thinking with all his powers, is the creature of God.

Wonderful powers of faith, but man should not be proud—he has not made it by his own action. Faith itself is the gift of God. Still the question arises—this faith in its highest reach, which distinguishes the spiritual from the material man, which is not limited to the present order of persons and things, of sense and times, which reaches into the high sphere of persons and things unseen and eternal. Whence this faith? Again science can only answer—God. But now we see a wonderful law of God's working, the answer nature gives to the question of the mind, of how God gives faith. In all the wonderful process of creative powers from the original atom to the loftiest man, each grade of the upward process is based upon the lower. The vegetable seed of life comes from the Life Giver, not from the dead matter; but it draws into its new power the properties of the matter. It is not independent of or separated from the electron and its force, but takes it up into new combinations. So animal life is based upon the material creation and the vegetable life. It breathes the air, treads the earth and lives upon its growth. So man while having powers above the animal, while he is from the Great Person,

God, and having powers of personality, in likeness of God, still he is based upon and dependent upon the animal, up grade after grade upon the atom. We see that God gives life, and also we have a glimpse of how He gives it. He does not throw away his prior rights, but adds to them. He gives life in all its grades; but this gift in its application is related to and takes up into itself the nature upon which it is based and with which it grows.

So in His greatest gift of Eternal Life, God is the Life Giver—He gives His life in His Son, who takes upon Himself our nature—lives for us, dies for us, appeals to us, lives in us. When we ask, “How does God work faith in us”—the answer nature and the Bible both give is that God ever works constructively. He begins, carries on, and completes His work. Not by casting aside, by destroying, but by keeping and adding. That much abused and much misunderstood and opposed word “evolution” becomes of large significance when we can describe it not as materialistic, but as Christian. God is the Author of the great plan—and presides over every step of its unfolding. He created the star dust, the wonderful electron atom—He formed the universe of blazing suns and this beautiful earth upon which we dwell. He gives the life in all its forms which makes this earth its home, even the high mental and moral life of mankind, and He gives the eternal life in His Son, our Savior. “To know God and Jesus Christ whom

He hath sent is Eternal Life.” He always gives by using that already given and adding to it. It gives new direction to old powers, new application to such powers in the new life.

God does not contradict Himself in His works, so that His conduct at any single point is independent of and separate from the rest. Whatever control he exercises over man and in man, is consistent with the free agency He originally gave man. God never coerces man. As a free agent, man fell into sin—as a free agent he remains in sin—so as a free agent he has faith in Christ and is saved from sin. Faith is not a new power given to a special few, but the power possessed toward men, now taking the direction toward God, and the change of direction is worked by God in the natural way by presenting Christ as the incentive and object of faith. God works by laws, a regular procedure—Man discovers and obeys laws. In nature obedience to law may be without conscious dependence upon God, and secures the natural results—the harvest from sowing the seed, but loses ever in this, the highest realm of the harvest, as a gift of God. But in salvation, obedience to God includes conscious dependence upon God—the surrender of the soul to God in the use of and obedience to the truth and in trust and obedience to God in Christ.

The idea of a capricious God is not found in nature, nor yet in the Bible. God is sovereign, both nature and Bible agree, but capriciousness belongs to earthly kings, not to the Heavenly

King. He saves according to the pleasure of His own will. But we know His character, we know His will is good to the children of men. Listen to Christ: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might be saved." The Apostle John says the gospel "was written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so have life in Him." The Apostle James says, "Of His own will begat He with the word of truth." The Apostle Peter says: "Ye are born again by the word of God." The Apostle Paul says—he who wrote our text—"So their faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Our Lord's Day of the Catechism has caught the spirit of the Scriptures, and tells us the Holy Ghost worketh faith by the use of means, the preaching of the Word, and the use of the Sacraments.

With reference to the Church, there are evidently but two classes. Members, grouped together by faith in Christ—and not members. We can hardly say that those not members have no faith in Christ. There are many, doubtless, who are careless and indifferent to the claims of Christ. Still, even these know of Christ and so have that element of faith—belief on sufficient evidence. Surely you should not be indifferent to the claims of Christ upon you. His great interest in you should show you the importance of learning more of Him—by trusting Him—of living in and for Him. If you do not give Him

your heart and life, you withhold from Him His due; and you can never be right while you are doing Him so great a wrong.

Others have faith in Christ, they think and claim, but do not unite with His Church for various reasons, as, they are not worthy, they are not clear on various points of doctrine. They are better now than many church members, and a host of other reasons. Granting that you have faith in Christ, is your course right? Christ has founded His Church and given it a great work to do in this world. The Church is distinct from the world by organization and ordinance—and as such has a large and beneficent work to do in the world, to represent and preach the Word and Life of the Savior to the race of mankind. Now, if all should follow your example and influence, the church would cease, would come to an end in the world. Christ's plan of saving the world would fail. You may say, my life is small—but it is large enough for that—it sets that example—it puts forth that influence. It is well to be humble, but we are carrying our humility too far when we make it an excuse for not obeying Christ.

The class of church members should recall that like the Ephesians, they are by God's grace of the household of God—having duties and privileges high and glorious. Of these the following Lord's Days of our Catechism more fully treat.

X.

TWENTY-FIFTH, TWENTY-SIXTH AND  
TWENTY-SEVENTH LORD'S DAYS OF  
THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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“SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM”

*Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.—MATT. 28:19.*

IT is said of John the Baptist, the herald of the King, that he preached “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” and “Baptized in the wilderness.”

Christ himself was baptized by John in the Jordan when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him as a dove, and a voice out of the Heaven said: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

During the ministry of Christ the disciples of Christ baptized large numbers of those who believed on him.

Our text gives the last command of Christ to His disciples as He was about to ascend to heaven. They were to make disciples of all the nations—were to baptize all such disciples, were to teach them to follow Christ by obeying his commands—and in so doing they had His promise that He would be with them through all ages to the end of the world.

The history of the Christian Church in the early days after the ascension of Christ, is described in the book of the Acts—on the day of Pentacost Peter declares to all the people that the Jesus they had crucified was the Christ Who had been exalted, had received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit and “He had poured forth that which ye see and hear.” Many receive this word, about 3,000 souls—and they were baptized. In the following statements of the book of the Acts frequent mention is made of baptism. Men and women were baptized—households were baptized—“he and all his were baptized”—the early disciples evidently obeyed the last command of their Lord. From that day to this through the long ages and the varied experiences and the many races of mankind the simple ceremony of baptism has been and now is the rite of initiation of the Christian Church.

It varies in the mode of administration. In the wonderful Baptistry of the Roman Catholic Church in Florence it is by pouring. In the Churches of the Baptists in our and in other lands it is by immersion. In our own church, as in most Protestant Churches it is by sprinkling. In some places all three methods are employed at the same time. A stream of water deep enough is used—the one representing the Church stands in this river and baptizes those coming down to him. Some bend the head and he sprinkles them from the hand full of water



he takes from the river—others bend still lower and he pours the water from a pitcher on their heads—still others he immerses in the river—very likely such was the scene when John the Baptist baptized in the River Jordan. In any case it is the application of water to the believer, and he is “Baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost”—by the command of Christ.

Our church acknowledges the validity of either mode, pouring, immersion, or sprinkling, though for sufficient reasons, as we shall see, it prefers the mode of sprinkling.

Now should an intelligent observer, one who had never heard of Christ or of Christianity, witness for the first time the rite of Baptism—he would be very apt to ask three questions—how did this practice begin—what is its history—who are these who are baptized—what peculiar society do they form, and what does it mean to them, and to all others, and to me?

We who are so familiar with the custom will do well to ask the same questions.

What is its history—when did it begin—how has it continued—how did the variety of modes arise?

Records of great events in the olden times were written on stone—as the obelisks of Egypt—or in brick as the cuneiform records of Babylon or in written histories as by Heroditus, or in their effect on mankind—as the battle of Issus was followed by the extending of the Greek



Kingdom and language and influence in Asia. One of the most enduring records of a great event, more clear it may be and even lasting than that on stone, or brick, or printed page or its influence in the history of Greece is that found in a significant ceremony observed by a human society whose existence is linked with it.

One of the strong evidences that Christ lived and taught, died on the Cross, arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, as recorded in the Gospels is the existence of the Christian Church today and its observance of this simple ceremony of initiation into its membership. We go back through the ages until we come to the time when Christ gave the command to the disciples to baptize all nations.

We can easily see how the variety in mode arose when we recognize the tendency of human nature to elaborations of ceremony and to the love of mystery. Pouring is more elaborate than sprinkling—and associated with it is having elaborate baptismal fountains in our Churches, found in the early history of the church and growing again in our day. Immersion arose in later ages of the church in finding in the Greek word we translate Baptism, a depth of meaning impossible to apply to the ceremony itself. The word has two forms, one means to dip, as to dye a garment in some colored liquid. The other means to immerse, but there is no idea in it of the immersed ever coming out of the water. It remains there. The ship sinks into the sea

and is soaked with the water—is immersed. This deep and mystic meaning may apply to the thing signified, but not to the ceremony of baptism with water. The one baptized in water is neither dyed with water, nor does he remain immersed in it.

The infinite wisdom and grace of our Lord and Savior led Him to select such a simple rite that all the love in our nature of elaboration and of mystery, as it finds its exercise in all races and through the long ages, could not obscure nor greatly change the simplicity of the ceremony.

The second question of the intelligent observer is who are these who are baptized, what society do they form? The command of Christ gives the satisfactory answer. Those who were taught of Christ, who thus became His disciples, and were led thus to do His commands—those who acknowledged Him as their Lord were to be baptized. The three thousand who were baptized at Pentacost were added to the Apostles and continued in the teaching and fellowship—so it is said in the narrative of the next few days that the number of those who hearing the word believed came to be about five thousand.

Christ in His earthly ministry has said that a confession of faith in Him as the Lord was the rock upon which He would build His church.

In the Acts, which recounts the continued work of Christ, the Holy Spirit sent by the ascended Christ blesses the proclaiming of Christ as the Lord by the disciples, in adding to their number

a multitude of believers, who upon believing were baptized and so became members of the Church.

Now as we look through the long centuries back to the time of Christ and over the many races of men dwelling in the many lands and climes, many people of varied gifts and stages of development we are amazed at the simplicity of the rite of initiation into the Christian Church. There is the entire absence of the occult—it requires no long instruction into many mysterious features—there is nothing difficult in it. It requires no hard training, nor strong effort,—there is nothing costly in it. It requires no accumulation of wealth, it is for the poor, the weak, the ignorant, as well as for the rich, the strong and the learned. Is it not like the Christ? He would shut no believer out of His Church. He is infinitely gracious to all. And still it is like the great teacher Himself—He makes plain the most important truths—it is vastly significant, the simple rite of baptism.

The baptism of infant children is also in harmony with Christ's teaching. "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for to such belongeth the Kingdom of heaven"—it is in harmony with the promises of the Old Testament to the people, "To you and to your seed after you"—and it is in harmony with the practice of the early church in the baptism of households.

We now turn to a third earnest question—what does baptism mean to those baptized, and to all

others? Our Catechism in the former Lord's Day gives the answer—"The Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel and confirms it by the use of the Sacraments," and further, "The Sacraments are visible signs and seals appointed by God to declare and seal to us the promise of the Gospel." The command of Christ makes baptism follow faith; the preaching awakens faith in Christ, baptism signifies and confirms the faith. Water is used for reviving—particularly for cleansing—water withheld, the earth grows dusty, parched and dead. Water given, the desert blooms with flowers and fruit. Water withheld, man becomes soiled and parched—water applied, he becomes fresh and clean. The application of water to the head of disciples, the sprinkling with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost signifies that the God we worship renews and cleanses us from sin, the sin that defiles and deadens. The command of Christ, the Great Head of the Church to baptize the disciples into the church membership makes the rite not only significant but is given to us as a seal of His promise to confirm our faith. We use a seal to authenticate a deliberate act or promise. So Christ promises to save the one believing in Him and adds the baptism as a seal of His promise. So the Apostle Paul in describing his own conversion from unbelief in Christ to believing in Him as his Lord, says that Ananias representing the Church exhorted him "To be baptized and wash

away his sins calling on the name of Christ.” We see therefore that baptism welcomes one into the society of believers, the Church; that it signifies what Christ does to the believer, cleanses and renews him; and that it is graciously given to the believer to quicken his faith—it is the seal of Christ’s promise to save him from sin.

While the significant rite of entering into the church coming from Christ Himself is to be greatly valued by us we are to be careful not to allow our inherent love of mystery to attribute such meaning to it as to obscure rather than to reveal Christ, and there is great danger of this as the history of the church clearly proves. There is no such thing as baptismal regeneration. Baptism does not regenerate but signifies that Christ regenerates. It is obvious that baptism itself does not save—Christ saves. Baptism does not wash away sins—Christ cleanses—baptism does not renew the soul—Christ renews—so membership in the church does not save—the church does not save,—Christ saves. Having been baptized in infancy does not save the adult, it should lead such to a personal faith in Christ the Savior. Neither does baptism save the child dying in infancy. We have abundant reason for believing that all children dying in infancy are saved by the atoning death of Christ, as Christ says, “To such belongeth the kingdom of heaven”—Christ welcomes them to His blood bought salvation.

It certainly is a sad mistake for anyone to think that he can be saved by any formal act, by being baptized—by becoming a member of the church—salvation can only be by becoming by faith a member of Christ.

By the very simplicity of the rite Christ warns us against bringing into it our own wild fancies and false hopes—we are to see Him in His gracious work and plain teaching—we are to look through it to Christ alone.

On the other hand we are not to be content with simply believing in Christ without being baptized. We may think we have some reasons for this, and for not uniting with Christ's Church, but we should question every reason which leads one to disobey the clear command of the Christ he believes in, of the Savior he trusts.

He has commanded us to confess Him before men. The life is the true confession of course, but here is a significant act for such confession which Christ Himself has selected and commanded; here is also the church to whom He has given the proclamation of His truth to the world by word and life. We should observe the act, should unite with His church.

Through all the ages this rite, and the entrance to His church have existed. They exist today for His gracious purpose. We are to use them now and to hand them down to the coming time by His direction.

These then are the meanings of baptism to those who are baptized, and to all others.

One enters His church by Christ's appointed way as a believer in Him, thus confessing Him before men as his Lord and allying himself with His followers. One thereby not only confesses his faith and thus honors his Lord and Savior but also strengthens his faith as he recognizes the significance of the rite in Christ's teaching—and receives it as Christ's own seal to His promise. It becomes of vast meaning to him in strengthening his faith.

Those who witness the rite but do not themselves believe in Christ are taught and should be deeply impressed—that Christ washes away sins and renews the soul.

This simple and clear teaching of the Great Teacher and wondrous Savior should lead them to see their need of Him and to trust in Him as their own personal Savior.



## XI.

### TWENTY-EIGHTH, TWENTY-NINTH AND THIRTIETH LORD'S DAYS OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### "SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER"

*And he took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them saying this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me—And the cup in like manner after supper saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you.—LUKE 22:19-20.*

**I**N certain portions of Africa and South America a white stone is found which is beautiful even in its rough state. But the whiteness is an accumulation of the dust of ages. When this dull outside covering has been taken off, when diamond has cut diamond into many bright surfaces, then the stone flashes with light as a spark of the sun and readily takes rank as the most precious of gems. So in order to discern the clear meaning of the Lord's Supper we must carefully cut off the errors and superstitions of the elaborate ceremonies which have accumulated upon it as it has come down to us through the ages until we have nothing left but the simple ceremony instituted by Christ Himself, a gem of purest ray serene, flashing its bright light upon our believing souls.



The tendency in human nature to elaborate the ceremonies of religion and to associate mysterious power with them could find but little scope for its exercise in baptism as we have already considered—it was a rite of initiation, the one thing being the application of water to the one entering the Christian Church to be but once applied and only to a single or to only a few individuals at one time. But the Lord's Supper was to be frequently observed by all members of the Christian Church as a society, an act of worship more elaborate in itself and of great significance in its frequency and general observance.

The growth of ceremony probably began very early in the history of the Christian Church and we can easily account for it. The simple religion of Jesus Christ was planted in the midst of the splendid and magnificent ceremonials of the Jewish religion in the Temple at Jerusalem, and spreading thence to the great pagan cities of Egypt, Greece and Rome it met everywhere the elaborate and mysterious ceremonies of the great heathen Temples. Worshippers of our Lord Jesus Christ largely came out from these religions—they brought with them of course the educated taste received from such elaborate ceremonies and desiring to win others from these religions as well as satisfy their own tastes they would quite naturally begin to make the religion of Christ more attractive in ceremonial. In so doing from such good motives they would not intend to in any way change the religion they

confessed, and still as ceremonies have their deep meaning as the elaboration grew the change in beliefs would naturally follow. The simplicity of the ceremony as Christ instituted it, as it came from the Great Teacher, taught simple truths—elaboration would do away with the simplicity both of the ceremony and its teaching.

The Roman Catholic Church today—as when our fathers came out from it and our Heidelberg Catechism was made, holds views of the Sacrament widely different from ours and makes it the centre of their elaborate worship. It is no stretch of Christian charity for us to believe that in the Roman Catholic Church there are many true disciples of Christ who have an humble faith in Him alone for their salvation, who sincerely obey His precepts and live their lives in His spirit and after His example. As we examine the errors of that Church with regard to the Lord's Supper, we should avoid any harsh, unchristian spirit and simply try to keep our faith free from them, and to bring others out from such errors as we have an opportunity. I think I state the matter fairly—at least, I mean to, from all the information I can gather.

The Roman Catholic Church holds that the bread and wine used in the Lord's Supper are changed in the act of consecration by the almighty power of God into the body and blood of Christ and as the divinity of Christ is inseparably connected with the body and blood, they

believe the whole Christ is present in each particle of the consecrated bread and wine.

The elements are therefore no longer bread and wine but the body and blood of Christ, they have become Christ Himself—the sacrifice—the host. The elaborate ceremonies of the church therefore have this as the centre.

The host is worshipped. The most impressive scene in the worship of that church is near the close of the service when the priest takes from the Tabernacle the consecrated host and turning slowly lifts it over the congregation; a little bell gives warning, and the whole congregation bend the head in worship, the host is too holy to be looked upon—again the bell rings, the host is replaced by the priest in the Tabernacle of the Altar.

Those who have witnessed the elevation of the host must be impressed by the evident devotion of both priests and people. Longfellow in the Golden Legend says:

“Melodious bells among the spires

“O’er all the house tops, and through heaven  
above

“Proclaim the elevation of the Host.”

The host is offered in sacrifice for sin. The Sacrifice of the Mass is the same as the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, is its constant repetition. As the sacrifice is the same so also is the Priest. Christ offers Himself. The officiating priest is carefully instructed not to say this is the body of Christ, but “This is my body.” This

sacrifice is offered not only for the sins of all the people, but for individual sins and for sins after death as well.

In order to partake of this sacrifice therefore there must be individual confession of sins to the priest, penance directed by him and absolution given by him; these are necessary preparations for partaking of the Lord's Supper.

In partaking of the Lord's Supper, one partakes of Christ Himself. The consecrated wafer is given by the priest to the communicant—but not the blood of Christ since there is the danger of a drop falling on the ground which would be desecration. But the belief is that each one partaking of the Supper partakes in that act of Christ Himself and therefore that the consecrated wafer conveys the inherent strength of Christ Himself to the communicant. Also it follows that if one does not partake of the wafer he has no part in Christ.

If the claim is made that the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is the miracle worked by God to authenticate His Son and His Church we can only say that it is contrary to all the nature of miracles in the Scriptures. They appeal to the senses as beyond the ordinary laws and forces of nature; this is contradicted by the senses. The form, color, taste, properties of the bread and wine remain, these cannot belong to the body and blood of Christ, they must therefore exist without belonging to any substance—a test of faith con-

trary to all the tests of Scripture or experience.

But if the bread and wine still remain such then to worship them borders on idolatry and their sacrifice is derogatory to the sacrifice of Christ.

We think of Christ as saying this bread broken by me represents my body soon to be broken on the Cross for you; this wine poured out by me represents my blood soon to be poured out on the cross for the remission of your sins.

But though we Protestants thus cast aside the elaborate addition of ceremony and errors found in the Roman Catholic Church, and strive to go back to the simplicity of the Lord's Supper as instituted by our Lord, there is grave danger we may unintentionally and unconsciously have our views tinged by their's to some extent. This is quite natural, almost inevitable, when we consider that our fathers were Romanists and broke away from their life long association and cultivated taste and views, and that we live today side by side with that church, and more and more recognize the greatness of her history and her life and her work in the world.

One such danger is to regard the Lord's Supper as a great mystery—this is a shadow of transubstantiation. Rather it is a simple rite to make plain a great truth of our religion, the bread broken, the wine poured out to show that Christ died for us—our eating and drinking to show our trust in him.

The truth is stupendous—but the sign is so

simple in order to help the most learned and the most ignorant believer to grasp that truth.

Another danger we are to guard against is that the Lord's Supper is a peculiar channel of grace, that Christ is specially present in His supper in what is called the Real presence of the Ritualists; this is more even than a shadow of Roman transubstantiation—it may be called consubstantiation. Christ is indeed present in His Supper but only in the same sense He is present in the Scriptures, in the word He preached; in fact the Lord's Supper is His own preaching of the word—making plain and showing forth His own teaching of the meaning of His death to quicken our faith.

A third danger arising from these two is to regard the Lord's Supper as requiring great holiness to partake of it. This too is a shadow of transubstantiation which requires freedom from sin, the confession to the priest and his absolution to become a communicant.

But our form for the administration of the Lord's Supper says: "We do not come to this supper to testify that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves; but on the contrary considering that we seek our life out of ourselves in Jesus Christ we acknowledge that we lie in the midst of death."

It is indeed a rite of awe inspiring solemnity and requires due preparation on the part of the communicant—but the preparation is a sense of our sinfulness and of our faith in our Savior.

The Apostle Paul's exhortation to examine ourselves lest we eat and drink condemnation to ourselves guards against making it a feast of self indulgence.

It seems that in the church at Corinth each family brought its own provisions, the rich feasted on more than the poor could bring, hence division rather than communion, hence also the danger of over gratification of appetite—the tendency to diversion and drunkenness—to profane the supper and the Lord of the supper before the heathen was the danger Paul warned against.

Now we go back through the ages to the night of the betrayal and denial and desertion—when Christ went alone to the cross, when they had not learned fully the teaching of His death—they have kept the passover, the old testament sacrament now fulfilled in Christ. And now He breaks the bread and pours the wine and gives to His disciples and they eat and drink with Him, and He institutes the Lord's Supper for all future ages. We see at once it is a communion—the intimate fellowship of the Supper. Christ is their acknowledged Lord. They have various degrees of knowledge of Him—of faith in Him and of character resembling Him; but they are equals among themselves in that they are believers in Him—they commune with Him.

His acts and words teach the disciples the meaning of His coming death. He could have avoided the cross, ascending with the "Twelve



Legions of Angels.” He could have overthrown the power of Rome as easily as the soldiers were thrown to the ground when He said “I am” in the garden. But He taught them that He died for them—that He gave up His own life upon the cross for them. This broken bread represents my body which is given to you—so I break it, and give it to you—so I give my life for you as He gave the cup, “It is the New Testament in my blood which is poured out for you”—“For the remission of sins.” All of you drink of it—and they all drank of it. You do not fully understand my mission, my death but I show you now—that I die for you—this is a sign to you—and this is my pledge to you.

We see at once the gracious tenderness of Christ in giving to His ignorant and weak disciples in the hour of their need such a clear and simple teaching of the meaning of His death and such a plain and strong pledge to confirm their faith that He died for them—and so would secure the remission of their sins and would sustain and cheer their life in Him. There is nothing to repel the weak faith, its whole design is to feed and strengthen the weak faith. This is no mystery, its whole design is to explain the mystery of His death. This gracious tenderness of Christ comes down to us in our need—a sign and seal of His dying for us and giving His life to us. There is the utmost graciousness therefore in the command of Christ, to those disciples and through them to the disciples of all succeed-



ing ages. "This do in remembrance of me." He shows them they have a duty to Him as well as a great privilege in communing with Him. Remember me—I have taught you the way of holiness. Remember me—I have died for you. Remember me—I live for you and in you. This is the clear teaching and the loving appeal of the Supper—soundness of faith must result—the central truth of Christ's atoning death is clearly and constantly to be kept in mind. Fervor of heart must result as we think of His wonderful love in dying for us—in securing freedom from the penalties and pollution of sin for us, by His loving self sacrifice. Holiness of life must result as we recognize that we no longer should live to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again who is our ever living Lord and Savior. In describing the institution of the Lord's Supper, the Apostle Paul adds as is clearly intended in this remembrance of Christ, "that as often as we thus eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim the Lord's death till He come." Thus each member of Christ's church—and the whole church throughout the ages preaches and proclaims to all the world the death of Christ for the sins of the world—and thus calls upon all to believe in Him for salvation. This is to continue until Christ comes again—the hope held before each believer—before the whole church—before the whole world—that He who so loved us that He died for us—who lives now in believing souls, and who yearns over all souls to save them, that He will come again.

Thus the Supper becomes a divinely appointed way of confessing Christ before the world, of preaching Him to the world and thus of confirming our faith and quickening our love and devotion for Him. The two must ever be united as clearly intended by Christ.

The Lord's Supper has not mystic power; it in no sense saves from sin, but it constantly directs the attention of the believer and of the world to the central vital truth of Christianity that Christ died for sinners.

Examine ourselves in the light of this truth, in our personal relation to this Christ. Christ went from the Supper to the Cross. He died for our sins—to the resurrection—He rose for our justification—to the throne on high—He lives in us by His spirit; He will come again to complete His blood bought salvation. We need Him. Let us trust Him. He commands us to confess Him. Let us obey Him. He promises to save us. Let us take the seal of His promise as given to us by Him. He calls us to proclaim His death till He comes. Let us with ever quickened faith, with ever increasing love, with ever growing likeness to Him as fostered by our frequent observing His Supper in remembrance of Him, commend Him to the world as our Lord and our Redeemer. We trust in the person Jesus Christ—love Him—serve Him—preach Him to the world in observing the Supper He instituted in remembrance of Him.

## XII.

### THIRTY-FIRST LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### “ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH”

*And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

—MATT. 16:19.

GIBBON, in his history of Rome, alleges there were five causes for the early and extensive spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire. First, the zeal of the disciples of Christ. Second, the belief in the rewards of a future life. Third, their claiming the power to cure diseases. Fourth, their pure, even austere morals; and fifth, their churches were republics in which equality, brotherly love and pure discipline prevailed.

There had been so-called republics in early Greece and Rome, but in both cases it was only of free citizens, and often these were a very small proportion of the population. In Greece, at one time, it is alleged that four-fifths of the people were slaves; and Gibbon says that at least one-half of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves. These, and the multitude of citizens of conquered lands, and with them a multitude of the poor were excluded from all power in the government. Even early republics

were autocracies and in the time of Christ, the government of the empire was in the hands of a very few autocrats—the mass of the people were not even citizens of Rome—they were the ignoble, the poor, the slaves, and the subject people of conquered nations.

When a church was established in any city of the great empire by the preaching of the gospel, the admission to the church and the government of the church were placed in its own hands by the words of Christ in our text—under the questioning of Christ, Peter speaking for the disciples, had just confessed their belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Christ then said to him, upon this confession of faith, upon this rock, I will build my church. And unto thee, thus voicing the faith and so representing the disciples—that is, unto my church I give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, that is the power of admission and exclusion to its own membership.

The preaching of the gospel by an apostle in any city of the empire or the preaching of travelers, gathered a few disciples of Christ—these confessed their faith in him to each other and before men, and so the nucleus of the church was formed. The sole ground of admission was the confession of faith—the applicant might be a nobleman, even a member of Caesar's household—or a rich business man of the city—or the poor citizen—or the slave—all were admitted as equals solely upon confession of faith.

Now as we watch the growth of the church as recorded in the Acts, we see a church becoming so large in numbers that it needed organization—such a church elected from its own members. Deacons, whose ministry of alms was needed, and further on the Apostles appointed Elders elected by the people in each separate church. Some of these elected ruling Elders were preaching Elders as well. And in bidding farewell to the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul calls upon these Elders to watch over the flock as the Holy Ghost had made them Bishops to feed the Church of God.

Thus in the prevailing, autocratic, civil government there was established a society having for the admission and government of its membership, the equality, brotherly love and self-control of a religious republic. We can easily see, with Gibbon, the great historian, that this would be an element greatly fostering the spread of Christianity.

In this day of great conflict between autocracy and democracy among the nations of the earth, when our own great republic has entered the conflict that democracy may have freedom of development in the world, it is well for us to recognize that the government Christ established in His church was a republic. God's plans do not change. This had been God's plan for the government of His ancient people of Israel—Moses had brought the people of Israel out from slavery, under Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and had

formed a government for them in their new land. This too, was a republic—the tribes were to govern themselves—they were to elect their rulers—“Able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain, to be rulers of the divisions of the people.” Moses not only delivered from the bondage of Egypt, but provided, by God’s direction, a government opposite in spirit from that of Egypt: that afterwards autocracy, the grasping of power by the ambition and ability of a few led to the Kingdom, was the act of man—overruled by God at length in Christ’s government of the spiritual Kingdom, that of the Church.

That in the government of the church, the ambitions and ability of a few should within a few centuries have brought in the spirit of autocracy—the rule of a few over God’s people, was the act of man in conflict with the design of Christ.

We of the Reformed Church in America may well rejoice, both for the government of our great nation and for our church that we can trace back through our Holland ancestry in the Dutch Republic, the teaching of Christ and the New Testament Church these four great principles—First, The Source of Authority, the people of the individual church. Second, the people ruled by their chosen representatives. Third, individual churches combine with each other by their representatives—so the states in our nation, so the churches in our denomination. Fourth,

the band of this combination, both in our nation and in our church is a written constitution.

So the name of our church itself is not derived from government simply as is the Episcopal, the Presbyterian, or the Congregational churches; or from rites of worship as is the Baptist, or from method of life as is the Methodist, but in government worship and in life, we go back of all the errors of our Mother Rome and of all the peculiarities of our Protestant sister churches and as clearly as we can learn and as earnestly as we can strive we seek to deserve the name Reformed, to be the New Testament church formed again in our modern day.

Now as we ask our Heidelberg Catechism what are the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven given to the church by the Lord, the answer is clear and reasonable, "The preaching of the Holy Gospel and Christian Discipline." Without the gospel there is sin in our hearts and lives—sin in the world but no remedy. Preaching the gospel is the proclaiming by anyone having experienced it of the God-given remedy for sin. The Apostle Paul says, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Herein is the open door—the key that unlocks and welcomes into the church—the believer confesses his faith in Christ. The church is thus the society of believers as Christ taught when his disciples confessed him as their Lord. Whosoever therefore, believes in Christ as the



Lord and Savior, is to be admitted into the Christian Church on confession of this faith. He may be poor or rich, learned or unlearned, low in social standing or high, having had a good record in morals or a bad one—he is to be admitted to the equality of a confession of Christ. All that can be required of his confession is that it should be credible. The officers of the church, the church itself, may be deceived. A confession may be false and hidden by a fair life. It should be fairly judged at the time of making it and throughout the continued membership. Christ gives the church both the power of admission and of expulsion. Both powers are to be exercised in His spirit and under His direction, and are so confirmed by Him. Even sincere believers are not perfect—among them offences may arise. Church discipline is therefore to be carried out according to the direction and in the spirit of Christ. This, too, our Catechism says is the power of the Keys, the opening and the shutting of the doors of the visible church that it may be like the invisible church seen and approved by Christ in Heaven. Immediately after the confession of the faith of the disciples in our text—and the gift of the Keys to them, Christ, with a chosen few, went up into the mountain of Transfiguration, where he talked with Moses and Elias, representing the Old Testament Church of His coming death at Jerusalem.

Soon after this, as it is recorded in the 18th

Chapter of the Gospel by St. Matthew, he gave the disciples clear directions for their self-government as His church. We may glance at the general scope of these directions. The greatest in the membership of the church is to be the most teachable and only controlled by Christ. The offender is to be treated with largest consideration—great faithfulness and utmost love. The object is to win him back to consistent life. Even if he must be expelled, he is to be as a publican and sinner—so not to be rejected, ostracized, contemned—but with loving desire to win them all to Christ. Each one also is to express the utmost forgiving spirit to a brother who offends, as he recognizes his own great need of the forgiveness of God. We see at once discipline is to be exercised by each member over himself—by each member over his nearby brother, by the whole church in love to Christ and love to all the members. It is not a matter of discretion to be left undone if one chooses, but to be faithfully exercised in the spirit and under the direction of Christ. Then are repeated the words of our text: “Whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.” This is a terrible power given in these words if bestowed upon any class of men to be exercised according to their own will. Arbitrary governments in the affairs of this life only, have always involved for the one put to death, an appeal to God in the future life—and even against such

limited power men rise in their manhood to fight for freedom.

But there is no arbitrary power given here. Even God Himself exercises no arbitrary power. He always rules in righteousness. With Him there is no respect of persons. Surely He would not give such power to any class of men. It is only when the disciples to whom Christ spoke—and in our day the church succeeding the disciples—act in the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love seeking to save, giving himself to save, that the power of the Keys exists. Thus, the power of the Keys is to be exercised in welcoming to full membership in the church upon the confession of faith and in insisting upon a life in obedience to Christ in harmony with such confession of faith.

The Apostle Paul spent a year and a half in Corinth and gathered a church there of perhaps 500 members—gathered them in a city of perhaps 500,000 heathen, from heathen immorality in which they had spent their lives and amid which they were to live in this church organization. Corinth, the commercial capital of Greece was celebrated for Grecian culture, “Corinthian speech” being a synonym for polish and eloquence, and notorious also for profligacy, “Corinthian life” being a synonym for licentiousness—a license fostered by the worship of licentious gods. It was to be expected that into a church so situated some pride of intellect should enter to question about the reasonableness of Paul’s

teaching and some licentiousness should enter to contaminate the purity of the Christian life. So in the First Epistle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he directs the church to keep both its faith and its life pure. The licentious member is not to be encouraged in his licentiousness by the silence of the church. He is to be faithfully rebuked for his own sake—and to keep the church to the purity of the life in Christ. If he persists, he is to be expelled from the church, sent back to the world, but this is to be in love to him as well as to save his soul by urging him to repentance. The divisions in the church of different teachings, and the rejection of some great truths of Christianity as the resurrection of the body, Paul meets with an eloquence more fine, even, than the Corinthian eloquence in the chapter on love and the chapter on the resurrection. So we have Christ's own teaching on confession of faith and the life of faith in His church, and we have an example by the Apostle to the Gentiles of the way in which the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline should be administered. The object and spirit of discipline are thus clearly taught by our Savior and illustrated by the Apostle Paul. The honor of our Lord, the purity of His church and the welfare of the offender. Private grudge is prohibited, popular prejudice is to be avoided, arbitrary power is forbidden. The spirit is only love—love for Christ, love for His church, love for the offender. The brother is to be restored.

Should he prove stubborn and impenitent, he is to be removed from the membership to be as a publican and sinner. But the whole spirit of the church and experience through the ages is to persuade publicans and sinners to trust Christ as their Savior. So he is to be persuaded to become a Christian. Alas, the church has often, especially through the Middle Ages, lost the spirit of Christ in her discipline, has ostracized, imprisoned—even killed the offenders.

The Catechism clearly declares that both admission to the church by the preaching of the gospel and exclusion from the church by discipline should be “according to this command of Christ.” Surely it is clear that the church should admit to its membership all those who are really members of Christ by a true faith. There should be, of course, an intelligent acceptance of Christ, a trust in Him for salvation from sin, and a purpose to live in obedience to Him. All these the disciples had when they confessed their Lord. But they had a great deal yet to learn about Christ and His redeeming work. He had as yet taught them little about the meaning of His death. Not a single one of them could, at that time, have accepted any of the great creeds the church has formulated since the New Testament times—creeds based largely upon the after-teachings of these same and other disciples. While it is very desirable to have creeds as we have seen, and to have a membership well informed upon them, it is certainly not according

to the command of Christ to have acceptance of such creeds a condition of admission to the church. One may be a sincere confessor of Christ as his Lord and Savior and yet be ignorant of many doctrines of the church. He should not be deprived of the duty and privilege of confessing Christ and of the membership of the church.

The church has no right to make any conditions of membership other than Christ has made. On the other hand, all those who do not acknowledge Christ as their Lord, do not trust Him as their Savior and do not purpose to live in obedience to Him should not be admitted to the membership—though they be the Kings of the earth, the leaders in learning, in wealth and in social life. The humblest disciple is to be admitted—the loftiest disbeliever is to be excluded according to the command of Christ. So with discipline. If any member of the church, however, great, however small, in worldly rank or standing, falls into an offence, clearly seems to be an offender, as taught by God in His Word, each one is to be reprov'd in love by the church of which he is a member in order that he may repent and turn from the offense to live the Christ life—and if he becomes impenitent and continues his sinful practices, he is to be expelled from the church. So if one rejects a doctrine of the church, the question arises, is it a primary or a secondary doctrine. Some may question, what is the primary doctrine? The spirit of the creed

certainly should be, "Come believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with me: let us trust Him as our Savior, and so learn more of Him." A greater question still arises. What is the spirit of the rejection? Is it rejected because one thinks Christ does not teach it, or is the objection a rejection of Christ as a teacher? Any real rejection of Christ in one's conscience is his own withdrawing from the church, and one's fellow-members. The church itself, should make that plain to the rejecter. Again, such expulsion from the church should be exercised in love in such a way to bring the loving loyalty to Christ of one's fellow-members, to lead to the same loyalty.

The humblest believer in Christ has the right to be admitted into the Christian church. Thus he fulfills Christ's command to confess Him before men—thus he strengthens his faith by the fellowship with believer and cultures the Christ life in himself and in them, and thus he keeps up the organization of believers Christ Himself formed and of which Christ is Himself the Living Head, to carry on His work in the earth through all the ages to come. His own sense of unworthiness, his own ignorance, his own weakness should lead him to Christ, and these should lead him to obey Christ in uniting with His church.

The church should also welcome all Christ welcomes, and should treat all her members as Christ would treat them in love. In this way, each individual member and the whole church



by the preaching of the gospel and by Christian discipline, according to the command of Christ, seeks the welfare of all its members—sets forth the purity of Christ—and proclaims to the world the salvation from sin wrought by the loving Savior of the lost.

The influence of the church in thus following her Lord's directions will have a large influence on public opinions, Christian civilization in its laws and judgments has wandered far from this spirit of Christ, as the church itself in past ages has done and is doing to some extent and in some cases, now. Penal laws are to guard the best interests of society, to discourage crime. Oftentimes vengeance and harshness have ruled. Christ brings to our consideration that the best interests of society is the restoration of the criminal to good citizenship.. It commends such treatment as shall show the love of society for all its members. Prisons should be controlled by love not by vengeance—should reform criminals not make and foster them. The church in but following her Lord's directions and spirit should thus reform the criminal laws of society. The church should be pure and strong in her Lord—the church discipline should never be neglected but should be faithfully enforced and always in the spirit of love, to save the offender, and to keep the church pure in doctrine and life, so preaching Christ to the world.

### XIII.

#### TWENTY-FIFTH—THIRTY-FIRST LORD'S DAYS OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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##### “THE IDEAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH”

*This is my commandment, that ye love  
one another as I have loved you.*

—JOHN 15:12.

**I**T was the night before the crucifixion—the last time before His death that our Savior was with His disciples to counsel and direct them. His farewell to them is found alone in this Gospel, and we have divided it here into four chapters. Each chapter has been given a single name fairly describing its substance. The Comfort Chapter describes Christ's presence with them in their duties and trials—the Abiding Chapter describes their life of faith in Him—the Holy Ghost Chapter describes their spiritual message and power—the Prayer Chapter commends them and their life work to the Father in Heaven. It sums up all the past teaching and it opens up all the future life as illumined by the Cross and the Resurrection. Our text sums up the whole teaching and work of our Lord in His last commandment—“that ye love one another as I have loved you—.” In His prayer to the Father, He says He sends them into the world as His Father sent Him. He prays they may

be one, as He and His Father are One—One in mission—One in love. “God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life—.” Christ describes His love in the words following the text—“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” The disciples are to so believe and trust and adore and obey Him that they shall be like Him and like His Father; they shall so carry on His work in the world in His spirit of love. That they so fulfilled His commandment is seen in the life and work of the early church. The heathen world acknowledged and commended them in its familiar saying—“Behold how these Christians love one another.” The New Testament describes the early church as a company having the spirit of love in their single belief—their simple worship—their pure government—their devotion in carrying on the work of Christ. In our studies we have seen the Apostle’s Creed was an early summing up of the fundamental truths taught by Christ. We have seen the simple worship in the plain sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper; we have seen the government of the church arising as a pure democracy. As we look again, we see at a glance that an undue proportion of our Heidelberg Catechism is devoted to the Sacraments. And as we consider these Lord’s Days we see great stress is laid upon freeing our worship from errors and super-

stitutions. We also recall that much of the explanations of the Apostle's Creed defends them from wrong views and interpretations. As we look at the constitution of our church, we see it embraces not only the Heidelberg Catechism and our Liturgy, but the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Canons of the Synod of Dort. As we glance at this Confession and these Canons, we see they defend various views of many important and of some comparatively unimportant truths from views held by other classes of Christians and denominations of the church. This glance at our own undue elaborations of creeds leads us to glance at the many creeds of the whole church as they have arisen in various ages and places, and we see that they too, frequently magnify unessential truths, peculiar features of worship and special forms of government to the distraction of earnest seekers for the truth; to repelling the careless, and to the dissension of sincere believers into many conflicting and contesting groups. We call our church THE REFORMED CHURCH, meaning that it is the New Testament church formed again. In so doing, we recognize there are many divisions and denominations of the Church Universal existing today as the outgrowth of the past, and that these differ from our church in creed, in worship and in government in various degrees, while all acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Head of the universal church. How shall we regard and treat these denominations and divisions? Shall

we hold ourselves aloof in proud distain? Shall we magnify the points of differences and antagonize them? Or shall we recognize the good in them and respect and love them? The disciples of Christ to whom He addressed this command had strong peculiarities. They were individuals of widely different attainments and temperaments; but they were disciples of Christ; they were to regard their allegiance to Him and their growing likeness to Him as controlling, and so were to love one another as He loved them.

In regard to Creed, Worship, Government, we of the Reformed Church are to be very strict with ourselves; to learn of and estimate our peculiarities at their full value. Christ did not destroy the individuality of His disciples; rather He cultivated it; but each one recognizing the value of His own personality, was to recognize and love every other disciple. Christ was the ideal, and He inspired the spirit of love among the disciples to love as He loved. So with the Reformed Church and all the other denominations of the Church Universal: we are to value ourselves, our view of Christ, our relation to Him—to have it grow more and more in our experience. And then we are to love all denominations in their relation to Christ. We are to be strict in judging ourselves and we are to have charity in judging others. Christians, individuals, groups, denominations are to love one another. And again as we now listen for the opinions of the world in what may be called

Christian lands and so also in heathen lands we never hear the ancient tribute, it was silenced long ago. There is, alas, no voice of the populace in any portion of the world that says today, "Behold how these Christians love one another." And alas, also, the more intelligent the voice, the greater the denial of such oneness of spirit in the great divisions and many denominations of the Christian Church. Also, alas, we cannot claim that our denomination is exempt from the great fault. There seems to be some ground for this fear that Christians today are so using their various creeds, modes of worship and forms of government that this last command of Christ is neglected. Surely the right use of creed, liturgy and government should foster and deepen love for one another, and so devotion to Christ in carrying on His mission in the world. Surely also this deep and widespread love Christ commanded if in general exercise in the whole church, would have large influence among the populace generally in fostering love of man for man. If this had been the prevailing spirit among Christians through the ages—and if this prevailed today among all Christians in Christian lands, there would surely be a better spirit—more love for humanity in what we call Christian civilization—and so Christian lands and nations would be in strong contrast with heathen lands. Alas, the contrast today seems to be almost the reverse. The nations of Northern Europe where the Christian religion has been

established for twelve hundred years and the nations of Southern Europe where Christianity has been proclaimed for nineteen hundred years, and our own nation a Christian nation from its birth, are just emerging from a Christian world war more fierce and cruel and destructive than any war ever waged by heathen nations in the history of the race. There has been splendid devotion of all our powers, lofty self-sacrifice to defend righteousness against cruel wickedness. The Allies have, at awful cost, saved the world from the arrogance of sinful ambition. But still the question arises, How is it possible that Christian public opinion in all these lands should have permitted such selfish ambition to seek world dominion, should have been forced to call for such heroic self-sacrifice to save from national slavery? Why did not these many Christian nations love each other so much that each sought the other's welfare as it sought its own? But this is only part of the vision. Now the war is over, what conflict arises in trying to form a peace based on righteousness and a League of Nations to prevent future war. It seems hard to find a ruling spirit of love. These many nations large and small—of different races, are all brothers in theory, in the view of Christ; but Christ seems to be seldom mentioned and to have but little influence in the Council of Nations in Paris or in our own Senate at Washington. But still this is only part of the vision. Now the war is over, what seething passions under



the fair surface of Christian civilization on the other side of the ocean and on this side, too, threaten to break forth with destructive force. Not only in torn Russia, but in law-abiding America, class arises against class, growing rapidly and ready to spring upon each other in fierce warfare, even to the overthrow of the government. The neighboring nations not only, but neighboring classes do not seem to love each other as themselves. Also in the industrial world, employees and employers, Capital and Labor are struggling with each other, each for its own selfish ends, instead of trying each to give the other fair treatment and both to benefit mankind. Alas! look at the church still divided in great divisions and in many denominations. Can any one say each division, each denomination loves all others as it loves itself. After nineteen centuries, do Christians love one another as Christ loves them? There may be some of this kind of love existing in mild exercise, in small neighborhoods and in small individual churches, but there is little sign of it between the sections of the church, at any rate, not in large controlling power. When a noble and energetic man is severely criticized as to the results of his life work by admiring friends, is assaulted by his foes and is only mildly defended by his own mature judgment, it will be natural for him to review the wisdom of his action. Has he had the right object in view, has he chosen the best means to accomplish this object, has he

devoted sufficient time and power to his life work? These will be some of the lines of his thoughts as he reviews his past and plans for his future. That which commends itself as a wise course for an individual is especially wise for a class—for the church of Christ. What is Christianity, anyway? What is taught in our theological seminaries? What do preachers preach about? What do church-going people demand of their preachers? For here, as in other matters, the demand has something to do with the supply. Does Christianity include love, love for God, love for the brotherhood of believers, love for all mankind to bring them to God the Father through Christ the Savior. Is not Christianity in itself love, in its method love, in its object love. Then the church in forming its creeds forms them as a means of cultivating this character and accomplishing this end; of drawing men together and drawing men to God. The creed should appeal—Come, let us love the Lord Jesus Christ and grow like Him. Whence, then, the divisions existing in the church? Because the reverse spirit in forming and using creeds has found exercise. Pride of opinion has grown into selfish intollerance of all other opinion. Various descriptions and shadings of truths have awakened and been confirmed by controversy, the unimportant shadow has hid the truth itself and divided and repelled believers from each other so that sects in the church have often arisen and antagonized each other in a spirit

bordering on the warlike. Sometimes God has been presented as far from attractive, as having such favoritism and partiality, as verges on injustice, and there is nothing so repellant to human nature as injustice. That creed must be wrong in itself or wrongly preached which repels from God and divides man from man. It certainly cannot be in harmony with Christ's creed. He calls us to love God our Father because He is infinitely lovely in all His character and actions, because He loves us with a greater love than any earthly father ever had for his children; and when we love Him as our Father, we will love each other as brethren—and will live and preach the love of Christ for all mankind.

Likewise the church has paid great attention to worship through the ages. Who shall conduct it, where shall it be conducted and under what forms? We see priests and preachers, altars and pulpits, magnificent cathedrals and modest meeting-houses, elaborate forms and simple ones. All these have so drawn attention to themselves and have so divided worshippers into classes often contending vigorously that each has the only true worship, that the mass of the people and the leaders themselves have lost sight of what true worship is. If worship is the pleasing of God by a man becoming in shape worthy of God, then the only question about the form of worship is, does it bring a man into a shape worthy of God, or does it repel man from man and man from God? God is love—

worship of God, true worship whatever its forms, is loving God and loving man as he loves and seeks to save.

Any group of people to prosper in the present and be succeeded in the coming years, must have some rules of order, some leadership, some common purpose and common life. So government has arisen in the church. It is a bewildering maze, the history of church government, from pure democracy to absolute monarchy, from great liberty to vast tyranny, and between these extremes many degrees and grades until the object of government has been lost sight of—the union and welfare of the governed—until the church itself is divided into often contending and sometimes fighting factions, while the world looks on in amazement. When Christian preachers and peoples, the whole church, recognizes the failure as well as the success of Christianity, and that the success is largely a surface matter, and the failure a leaving unchanged the deep nature of man; the success a matter of intellectual belief, creeds, a matter of religious observance, formal worship—a matter of fellowship, a government; the failure the losing sight of and effort for the object of a simple creed, a pure worship and a just government, that is a life of devotion to Christ in keeping the law of God; when the failure is recognized as it exists in the whole world and especially in Christian nations, a lack of love among Christians and of the influence in planting and fostering love as

the spirit of Christianity among classes, nations and races of mankind; when the church thus reflects upon its life and work for the past nineteen centuries in the whole world, it must surely cease from fostering complacency, if such has been its feeling, and now earnestly resolve to turn over a new leaf, to hereafter seek the object of Christianity—love—and to use all its means and methods to secure that end. There is still time for the church to do her great work in this earth. The sun is not dying out, the earth is not exhausted, the race of man is still young, the gospel has not lost its power. There are twenty centuries behind us; there may be, probably are, two hundred and more centuries ahead of us. God is never in a hurry, never impatient. In His gracious plans there is still an opportunity given His church to spread His kingdom in all the earth. There is still a vast call for the gospel of love.

What nation shall have the dominant influence in the League of Nations, should it be formed, is a question of little importance compared with the kind of influence it and all the nations shall have—influence of self-aggrandizement or influence of loving service. Whether the Bolshevik, the Bourgeois or the Aristocrat group shall rule in Russia or anywhere else is of little consequence beside the question—How shall any class rule for itself or for the good of society? If our own government of which we are so proud, “the government of the people, by the people, for the

people," amounts to anything worth while, it must realize this ideal by the growth of the Christian spirit of love. Public opinion must put in office those only who regard their office as a public trust to be administered not for their own power or glory, but for the good of all the people. If the great power of man over nature acquired today becomes a blessing and not a curse to the race, man himself must become Christian. The great forces of industry, the inventors, the owners, the managers and the employees of producing, manufacturing, transporting and marketing agencies must each seek the other's welfare and all must combine for the good of society.

What a glad day it will be for the earth when all these things shall be brought about by Christian love. Then will be realized the many prophetic visions of the Kingdom of God in this earth. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, should He return to the earth tomorrow, could not establish His kingdom by force, the old Roman way. Even He must establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth by leading mankind to keep the law of love. This work He now gives His Church to do in His service.

So we easily recognize that the church must see and realize that the object of creed, worship and government is to live in Him and carry on His work. To do this the church must obey the last command of her Lord, "That ye love one another as I have loved you"; must so yield to

the Holy Spirit as to have His spiritual message and power, and so must realize the prayer of our Lord by becoming one in mission and one in love with the Father in Heaven.

The incidents recorded soon after our text of the Garden of Gethsemane and the Court of the High Priest, afford an incident to the church of today as she reflects upon her past and plans for her future.

Peter was a man of bravery and enthusiasm. In the Garden he defended his Master with the sword. Peter alas, sometimes distrusted himself and quailed before great opposition. He sought his own comfort and safety as he sat by the fire and warmed himself in the High Priest's palace. Peter's strong allegiance to Christ was aroused again as Christ looked upon him—and he went out and wept bitterly. From this time on his bravery and enthusiasm increased until his martyr death. It was but a short hour he spent by the fire warming himself. Ever after he was true to his Lord and did a vast service for mankind.

The nineteen centuries of the church's history are but as that short hour. The church has still to do a vast work for her Master in the coming centuries.



#### XIV.

### THIRTY-SECOND LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### “GOOD WORKS”

*Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.—TITUS 2:14.*

**I**T is astonishing how much truth is condensed in and clearly expressed by this text; here is stated man's condition in nature “in iniquity”—Christ's work to “redeem us” and the result man, “zealous of good works.”

This is the truth elaborated, illustrated and enforced in the whole Bible. This is the truth experienced in the heart and life of each Christian. This is the truth set forth in our Heidelberg Catechism. Our Catechism has three divisions: I. Man's Misery; II. Man's Disobedience; III. Thankfulness.

We now enter upon the third division, Man's Thankfulness to God for delivering him from his misery. The text says Christ purifies to Himself a people for his own possession zealous of good works—He describes Salvation as being “zealous of good works.”

There are two truths very important for all

to realize about good works—the first is that such good works are in no sense necessary to salvation; the second is that they are the essence of salvation.

These seemingly contradictory truths are of the utmost importance to us. I do not know which is the more important of the two. We may consider them separately.

First: Good works are in no sense necessary to our salvation; they do not form any part of it—they do not in any way contribute to it; they do not in any way minister to it. In truth what we call good works may stand in the way of our salvation. May hinder us from accepting Christ who alone saves from sin both from its guilt and from its power.

We must recognize that we are sinners in need of salvation and that Christ is the complete Savior. If anyone is inclined to rely upon his own righteousness for his salvation he should carefully examine it in the light of the law of his being—God's law—it may meet with the approval of his fellow-men—does it meet with the approval of God; it may satisfy very high human standards—does it satisfy God's standards? Have you from the first moment of consciousness spontaneously, naturally, constantly loved God supremely. Have you loved yourself as a creature of God, to make the most of yourself as God would have you in His sight. Have you in that way and to that degree loved your neighbor as yourself. Is this your nature now?

Or has there been the reverse record and is there a reverse tendency now? You may not approve of your record and tendency—you may even try to atone for it and to overcome it but you consciously fail both in love of God and in love of man. Your soul is like a bird in a cage. It was made to fly, to soar with exalting wing in the sunlight of the broad heavens but try as it will, it strikes the strong wires of the cage, becomes discouraged, dispirited—a willing captive contented with fluttering from perch to perch in its cage—only in our case we have constructed our own cage with the vices of ingratitude, indifference and disobedience to God and self indulgence of our lower nature—and selfish struggles with our fellow-men. Still we were made to fly in the broad heavens of God's love—and our very fluttering is a remnant of our original nature as God designed us.

Only do not be deceived that our fluttering commends us to God. Our righteousness—our good works in the sight of men, and in our own sight are nothing more than the fluttering of our better nature and are utterly powerless to break the wires of our worse nature. Such righteousness if it satisfies us will only keep us from Christ—Who alone can let the prisoner free. Such righteousness can be no part of our salvation. May keep us from salvation. Christ saves sinners—He does not wait for them to become righteous, to come half way out of sin, its penalty, its power, or any distance. Christ

comes all the way to the sinner—and saves him altogether.

The Gospel of Christ is not “Do the best you can and Christ will do the rest.”

He is not a part Savior, but a whole Savior. Our good works of whatever amount or degree are no part of our salvation. We do not escape the curse of the law or receive the favor of God because we are good—because of our good works, but solely because Christ is our Savior and we trust in Him. Our Catechism says Christ has redeemed and delivered us by His blood and revives us by His Holy Spirit. We have in former Lord’s Days seen how Christ by His death and life takes away our death in sin and renews our life in Him. We recognize our misery and rely entirely by our faith in Christ for our salvation. Our text says Christ redeemed us from all iniquity and purifies unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good work. The zeal for good works does not save in any sense but they show that we are saved. Christ saves and He alone. The man in the ark was safe not because of his character—not even because he was of the family of Noah—but because he was in the ark. The man behind the door post sprinkled with the blood of the lamb was safe not because of his character, not because he was of the family of Abraham, but because “he was sheltered by the blood.” In both cases they believed the threatening and the promises of God, and in both cases they must have been thankful to God for His

salvation. The zeal for good works does not secure the favor of God in Christ but flows from it. And zeal for good works does not merit eternal life but this manifests itself in good works. The source of the Mississippi River is in a large spring in the north of our land. The great river does not flow into the spring but from it and grows as it flows.

We shall more fully consider the nature of good works in succeeding Lord's Days, we need only state generally now that they are good in God's sight, both in spirit and in expression they are in obedience to the law "love God supremely and love your neighbor as yourself." This is the high standard, the lofty ideal to which we aspire and strive. The Holy Spirit renews us after the image of Christ—He was perfect and we are to be constantly aspiring and striving after this perfection. The text uses the word zealous, the idea is that of boiling up, not merely bubbling up as a fountain but the ardor of heat boiling up, the idea of enthusiasm to be enthused by the spirit of God in Christ in the new and eternal life.

There are certain results to be attained by good works and the Holy Spirit used these as motives to stir us up to zeal. All human life needs motives to action—and through exercise life grows in strength—becomes more zealous—more enthusiastic.

Our Catechism presents three strong incentives to such zealous living—to constant good works.

1 First, they show our gratitude to God—and so praise Him. Good works are not for reward, but for thanksgiving. They spring spontaneously in praise of God. A man is sick of a dangerous and contagious disease and a skilled physician risks his own life and devotes his time and ability to secure his recovery. Surely such a man whose life is saved will have gratitude to his friend. Shall we not express our gratitude to the Great Physician of our souls. A man is poor and in despair and a friend relieves his poverty and puts him on his feet again and sets him on the way of prosperity, will he not be grateful? Shall we not be grateful to God who relieves our poverty—gives us new courage and opportunity and holds before us the riches of heaven? A soldier is captured by the enemy and suffers all hardship of the prison—and his captain risks his life, breaks open the prison door and leads him back to freedom. Will he not be thankful for the rescue? Shall we not be grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ who shed His blood to open our prison doors and to lead us out to freedom in His service. Good works are the only possible expression of our thankfulness to God. We should be zealous in them.

2 The second incentive our Catechism mentions is good works are the fruit of faith and so assure us of the sincerity and strength of our faith. If I was sick and a good physician promised me restored health, my greatest satisfaction would be to feel the coming of health. If I was poor

and cast down and a rich and wise friend offered me help and a new courage and start to prosperity my greatest comfort and courage would be to feel the start and growth of the offered prosperity. If I was a soldier and my captain promised me his help to freedom, my greatest courage would be to hear his step—to see the prison door open—and to walk with him to freedom. So I, sick, poor, in prison receive the gracious offer of Christ's deliverance if I trust Him. My greatest comfort is to feel His deliverance, to know my faith is in Him—that He saves me. Faith works by love—purifies the heart—so faith evidences its presence and power in good works.

The third incentive is that by good works we may bring others to share the salvation in Christ. Those who believe in Christ—those who are saved in Him earnestly desire that their fellows also shall experience His salvation. How can this desire of the heart be brought about. If your face shines with thankfulness to God, if your faith evidences itself by good works your fellows will see the Christ life in you. Then when you speak to them of your Savior, and their need of Him, they will listen, for your life as well as your tongue proclaim the blessedness of salvation in Christ, and they will want to possess that blessedness.

If we delight in religious observances, if in the family and social life, we are loving and generous—if in business and political life we are



just and true—if in all our lives we show love to God and love to our fellow-men—if we are zealous of good works, we are trying to live the Christ life. Our lot may be hard—have many struggles for daily bread and sufficient clothing—or it may be prosperous—we may be ignorant or learned—high in social standing or lowly—healthy or sickly—happy or afflicted, whatever the particulars, this will be the blessed outcome—others may be gained to Christ. We grow more and more zealous of good works in thanksgiving to God, in experiencing the blessed salvation and in commending Christ to our fellow-men. Surely this is a noble life worth living.

We have in former Lord's Days of our Catechism considered the Church of Christ as an organization of His followers. It is a divine organization of which He is the head, the conditions of membership, the ordinances, the government are all of His ordaining. Hence also the design of the church must be divine. Our text is from the Epistle of Paul to Titus. The Epistle itself may be called, Directions for the organizing of churches. The text says Christ purifies unto Himself a people for His own possession zealous of good works. This of course as we have thus far considered includes each individual believer in Christ it manifestly also sets forth the design of the organization of the church—a peculiar people—a people for his own possession. The condition of membership—the ordinances—the discipline, the whole organization to promote

“zealousness for good works.” The communion of the saints is an article of the Apostle’s Creed. They are to encourage, stimulate and help one another in their zeal for good works. The church is commissioned to observe the worship of its Lord—the observance of the Sabbath—the cherishing and proclaiming the word of God. Its fellowship is to promote the wholesome lives of its members, lives of righteousness and love in all the relations of the social life. Christ’s redemption of the individual from his iniquity is of necessity the basis of the redemption of the church—the organization of believers, and He purifies them together as His peculiar people zealous of good works. Man is a social being in his nature. Love of man must flow from the love of God.

The Bible has as distinct a conception of society as it has of God—God the Father, man the brother. There is as much Biblical sociology as there is Biblical theology. The church must live and proclaim and advance the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The immediate aim of Christ is to save the individual. The mediate aim of Christ is a saved society, the church. The ultimate aim of Christ is a saved race—the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth. The church then in every community is to live the Christ life in that community—to live as Christ would live there—to discover the needs of the community, to consider the best way of ministering to them, and to bring the combined life of

the organization into zealousness of good works. The world then has caught a glimpse of Christ's great design when it demands of the church that it not only should show the world what to believe but how to live—and thus the world is right in judging the sincerity of the faith of the church by the earnestness of its life, the sincerity of its love for Christ by its ministry to the needs of mankind.

The church is to do good works—as the individual is—not to save itself nor to increase its membership, nor to advance its social standing, nor for anything short of the love for Christ—out of likeness to Him as He loved to serve and to save and to so commend Him to the world; to do good works for the love of doing them; in a zeal constantly exercised and growing. In our own city there are large numbers from foreign lands, what can the church do for them? There are great numbers of operatives in our factories, what can the church do for them? Surely we should show the brotherly spirit and do our best to secure them just wages—good living conditions—the education they need—all this and much more from love of Christ and loving them as He loves them and so to recommend Christ to them. Many young women are on our streets at night or in dance halls. What can the church do for them. Many of our men are in saloons these cold winter nights. Where else can they go? What can the church do for them? Our church and other churches of our city have large

rooms for worship and social life. Can these be used in any way to minister to the needs of others beside our own members? There are many needs of the community where we live. We have a large, harmonious church organization. Surely we may discover many possible ways to meet the needs of our community if we are zealous of good works, zealous to see the needs, zealous to discover ways of meeting, zealous in ministering out of love for Christ—in the exercise of Christ's likeness loving our fellows as Christ loved them, and so to commend Christ to all classes and conditions of our fellow-men.

We should cultivate the noble life like unto our Lord's—should have the enthusiasm He had as His life on earth is described in the scriptures. "He went about doing good." This zealousness of good works of the church extends beyond the individual church to the denomination of which it is a part. The many agencies of our Reformed Church in America are to be heartily sustained and zealously exercised.

The Domestic Missionary work in our own land, the Foreign Missionary work in Japan, China, India and Arabia. Our missionaries should feel the thrill of enthusiasm in the great work of preaching Christ to the world as they recognize not only that Christ has so commanded them and is with them to bless, and their church has great zeal in sustaining them and is working through them. So also the agencies of publishing all needed papers, tracts and books for the

spread of the Gospel in our own lands and in heathen lands afford a channel for the strong flow of our zeal for good works.

So also the agencies of many stages in preparing men for the ministry of the Gospel of Christ, selecting devoted, able men and giving them the best culture and training form a very important division of good works in which we should all be zealous.

Two things are to be remembered. We should not confine our zeal to organized agencies of our denomination but should as members of the individual church find a large outlet of our zeal in individual work among our fellow members and among our acquaintances. Also we should not confine our zeal to our own denomination, but should love and encourage our sister churches in their good works, an incentive of zeal from one denomination to all others to help the good work. The whole church will thus become more and more one church, the Holy Catholic Church—a peculiar people zealous of good works.

## XV.

### THIRTY-THIRD LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### “CONVERSION”

*Be Ye Renewed in the Spirit of Your  
Mind.*—EPH. 4:23.

YOU cannot draw fresh water from the ocean. You cannot pour honey from a cup full of vinegar. You cannot gather good fruit from an evil tree. Our Savior asks: “Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?”

So you cannot produce holy living from a sinful character, or good works from an evil heart. So this Lord's Day of our Catechism teaches Bible truth, truth confirmed by common sense, truth of which each one of us must have experience when it says a man cannot be saved except by being converted. It also makes very clear what conversion is, a sincere sorrow of heart on account of our sins, and sincere joy of heart in God through Christ. We will also see how this conversion may be secured, and what are its results—good works—.

This then is the important truth our Catechism calls us to consider. The need of conversion, its nature, the means of attaining it, and the results.

Concerning the necessity of conversion it is seen at once that it is only necessary for salvation. Many live and die without giving any evidence to their fellows of being converted. It is not absolutely necessary for even what passes among men for a faithful good life. But if man is by nature a sinner, he is alienated from God, it is self evident he must be converted and renewed in the spirit of his mind to be reconciled to God to be saved.

People differ in character as in faces. There are various degrees of alienation from God. There may be enmity or only indifference to Him as seen in daily life. Here is one rushing down the road of life with all the impetuosity of an already long descent—rushing with eager madness away from God, the source of all good. Here is another walking upon the serene uplands of morality yet his back is turned toward God. He is conscious that his morality does not arise from any desire to please God, that he is utterly indifferent to God the source of all good, that he is alienated from Him.

We may ask what shall become of these in the future life supposing they die unconverted. They will enter the future as they leave the present life with such varied records and characters for there is no reason to believe that death works conversion by itself. But this is something foreign to our present subject—for we are considering salvation here and now, in this present life. Salvation is being renewed in



the spirit of the mind, is being reconciled to God. The one rushing down in vice hears the voice of God to him, "turn and live." He pauses on the brink of despair—and turns to God. The one walking away from God in his proud morality hears the same voice, he should hear it sooner and more distinctly since his faculties ought to be keener—and he too turns to God.

Now it is easy to see there will be a great difference in the experience of these two men. The one at the bottom of the hill will have a hard climb—his natural inclinations, his acquired propensities, his habits and companions—his reputation are all against him; but there is one thing—he has turned—he is facing and climbing upward—he no longer halts—he now loves God, his Savior in Christ. The other on the serene uplands of morality may have very little change in outward life, he already is a good husband and father, neighbor, business man and friend. But there is one thing that fills the old life with a new life, he is no longer indifferent, he now loves God, his Savior in Christ. Both are renewed in the spirit of the mind, the intensity of the feelings will vary with the natural powers of the mind and with the nature of the past record of the life—the one as he recognizes—the hideous nature of his wayward life—the other as he recognizes the meanness of his having left God out of his life.

Our Catechism fully describes conversion in what it turns from and in what it turns to—in

the change of mind in this double action. In this it follows closely the action described in the verse preceding our text—and in that which follows it—

Conversion in the putting off the old man is according to the Catechism a sincere sorrow of heart that we have provoked God by our sins and more and more to hate and flee from them. The man of vice and the man of mere worldly morality now in conversion agrees in seeing that the law of their being “love God supremely and your neighbor as yourself” was the expression of the goodness of God for them and in breaking it they have sinned against God; that God has blessed them with innumerable blessings and been patient with them—and still they sinned against Him—that God so loved them that He gave His Son to save them, that Christ so loved them that He died for them, and still they sinned against Him—that God granted them many opportunities for repentance and pleaded with them in many ways by His Holy Spirit, and still they sinned. Each one feels—according to the quality of his nature, that he has offended the holiness of God, abused His goodness—rejected His love; and now that God forgives him through Christ deeply increases his sorrow, that he has so shamefully treated the infinite and gracious God—his Father and Savior. His sorrow is on account of his sin, not on account of its effect present or threatened, but that it deserved all these and more. The prisoner’s sorrow is that

he has been found out. The slave's sorrow is that he is punished. Such sorrow still cleaves to the sin—"the sorrow of the world works death."

This however is a son's sorrow, a son, "who has come to himself" as the Savior says in the parable—a sorrow that he has sinned against a good and loving Father. This sorrow leads him to hate and flee from sin. He may still have the old propensities to his own peculiar sins—but he struggles against them. He will not give any quarter, any welcome to that which wrongs and offends his good Father, to that which would crucify afresh his loving Savior.

"If I believed I was saved, as you do," said an infidel to a Christian, "I would take my fill of sin." The answer was prompt and fit. "How much sin would it take to satisfy a Christian when the more Christian he is the more he hates sin."

But conversion is not only turning from it, it is turning to. Conversion is not all sorrow clouding our life in gloom, there is joy in it filling our life with light—it is not all struggle with the old nature, it is the aspiration of the new nature—it is not only putting off the old man, it is putting on the new man. There is such a thing as joy even in the sorrow—joy that one sorrows. The poor man joys that he can put off the coat of rags for he can put on far better clothing; the prisoner that he can put off his prison garb, for he can then have the

citizen's dress; the slave that he can cast aside his slave covering and be clothed a free man. So our Catechism gives the positive side of conversion, that to which one turns with eagerness. It is a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.

These are very strong words joy and delight, and between them love. How much joy and delight if we consider carefully the experience of our lives flow from and are depending upon love—the love of parents and children—the love of husband and wife—of brothers and sisters and friends. How much joy and delight there is in growth toward an ideal—the growth of a rose to its perfect beauty—of a child to full manhood or womanhood—of a life to full mental and spiritual development—of an enterprise or cause to success. Our Catechism strikes the truth when it associates joy and delight with love and with living according to the will of God. Thus the love we have in the noblest relations of our earthly life is but a faint reflection of the perfect love of God. The growth, the aspiration, the endeavor of the noblest life of mankind is toward the loftiest ideal, the ideal of God Himself is His will for us. The suffering of this life flows largely from lack of love—from selfishness and strife—from lack of aspiration and endeavor to attain the high ideal of our Creator and Father. Conversion is the process he has provided for the recovery of

the ideal, for the restoration of the love—and it brings joy and delight, the present, the highest, the best to those renewed in the spirit of their minds.

Here also nature forms in man differently as the surface of the earth differs in form—so will the amount and intensity of both the sorrow and the joy of conversion vary with man's nature. There are on the earth's surface great mountains and high hills—also broad valleys and wide plains, mountain streams are often rushing torrents, sometimes shallow, sometimes deep, while the valley streams are gentle or strong and may be large rivers. But the water flowing in torrent or river is the same in essence—the gathered rain from the clouds of heaven. So the feelings of sorrow and joy differ in amount and intensity according to the natural gift of man, but they are the same in essence—sorrow for sin against God—joy in God in Christ.

There is one feature of effect we may notice in passing. The one converted from an excess of sin rioting in vice may become very earnest in Christian work and largely successful in bringing many souls to Christ, and some may infer that an outrageous, sinful, life is therefore a preparation for great usefulness in Christ's service—while the one converted from worldly morality does not have such marked influence. But this is to be considered—the mountain torrent makes the great appearance of power, so the fiery, impulsive nature of the one converted

from vice may be greatly blessed in converting his fellows and in impressing the community; but after all we know that the well-watered valleys and plains produce the world's harvest of grain and fruits, so the strong deep nature of one who has lived in worldly morality, now converted to God, may be so steady and constant in the service of his Savior that in the long run he may be the most useful in bringing souls to Christ and in thus upbuilding in Christ's likeness.

We should be careful not to measure ourselves by one another but according to the description of God's word, not according to the amount and intensity of feelings as shown in others, but according to the essence or kind of the feelings. Conversion is a continuous work; we should seek to grow in amount and intensity of feelings and in their resultant living, but first of all to be sure that we sorrow for sinning against God—and that we joy in God in Christ, in loving and serving Him. You who are thus converted are to be congratulated upon the renewing in the spirit of your minds—you who are not conscious of such a blessed state and still desire it may well consider carefully the teaching of God in His word of the way in which conversion may be secured.

There are four classes of texts in the Scriptures that give us four distinct teachings of the way conversion may be secured.

In the first place man is called to convert

himself—"Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" is the call of Christ Himself—as describing His whole ministry. "Repent ye, and be baptized" is the call of Peter at the day of Pentacost—and again to the people in the Temple—and again in our text Paul says "put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man." Everywhere in the Scripture the call is Turn ye—Turn ye, The clear duty of every man is to repent and believe the Gospel.

In the second class of texts the truth is said to convert man. In the Old Testament it is said: "The law of God, that is the word of God, is perfect converting the soul." In the Epistle of Peter it is said, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God." In the third class of texts the one converted is said to convert others. In the penitential 51st Psalm, the converted sinner promises, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted to thee." "He who converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death." In the fourth class of texts God is said to convert a man, Ezekiel represents God as saying to sinful men, "A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you, I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes." The Apostle Paul says to the Colossians, of Christ, the Lord, "You that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked



works yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death to present you holy and unblamable in thy sight."

The conversion of Paul is an instance of these four truths fully described. He believed Christ was an impostor and so persecuted His followers. The vision he saw on his way to Damascus convinced him that Christ was the Son of God. The vision did not convert him, it simply showed him the truth. God so showed him the truth. The lives of Christ's followers whom he had persecuted as he remembered them confirmed this new truth. Paul seeing the truth that Christ was the Son of God became His follower. Paul turned. God turned him, the truth turned him. Believers turned him.

We see at a glance these truths are not contradictory but cumulative. God is our all and in all. We have not made ourselves any laws of our being. He created us with all our powers and He made the laws under which all our powers work. When we use our powers in obedience to His laws He works in and through us. We according to these gifts of God and the laws of our social being have large influence over each other. Again, truth itself has large influence over each one of us; we may resist or evade it, but even this abuse of truth testifies to its power. So to come to the first class of texts or truths. We recognize the power of our own will in any matter involving the question of duty, the power of choosing—of deciding for or

against, the strong saying of the soul, the “I ought” of a soul. In this matter of conversion each one knows he ought to turn to God—that the repentance of sin and the trust in Christ must be his own act. He knows it is the truth that thus calls upon him to act. He knows also that I who am preaching am speaking of my own experience when I urge him to turn to God and he knows also that his converted friends plead with him to turn to God and live, and he knows also that in all these ways God in His providence and by His grace—God his creator, his bountiful benefactor, his loving Savior is pleading with him to turn, and believe and love Him in time and through eternity. You who are not converted may and should recognize that fact—you must know that conversion is necessary to reconciliation with God—to your salvation from sin—that you should turn now to Him—that the truth calls you—that your friends call you, that God calls you. He will renew the spirit of your mind. He will bless you with His blood bought salvation. Turn to Him!

The results of conversion are good works; these our Catechism says proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God and to His glory—and are to be distinguished from the so-called good works founded on the imaginations and institutions of men. The full description of these good works will be the subject for future consideration.

## XVI.

### THIRTY-FOURTH LORD'S DAY OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

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#### “THE END DESIGNED BY GOD”

*The End of the Commandment is Charity Out of a Pure Heart and a Good Conscience and Faith Unfeigned.*

I TIMOTHY 1:5.

THE meaning of the word *end* in the text is obviously not the terminus or limit as the end of this platform, but the design or purpose as the purpose of this platform is to lift the speaker so he can be seen and heard by those in the farthest seats. The End of the Commandment or as the revised version says of the charge is love. Paul, the aged and experienced preacher writes his charge to the young preacher that the aim or design of Christian preaching and living is to produce love. These men, Paul and Timothy, were among the early founders of the Christian Church, with its proclaiming the truth and its fellowship of believers, so the design or end of the church is to produce love.

Where did Paul get this charge? Did he devise it? And are we listening only to his charge, to a young preacher? We recognize at once that Christ, the Great Head of the Church, gave the charge. Christ says:

“This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you.” We know also as he says that Christ came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it, and that the summary of the Ten Commandments is love—as He has taught us. Love God supremely, love your neighbor as yourself. So God in Christ says the end or design of all His law and His gospel, of His church as carrying out His teaching and His life, is love.

There are several questions that one will instinctively ask about any great institution. What is its origin and history? What is its nature? What is it for? And how is it adapted to secure this end? We have already considered some of these questions about the Christian church. Now, this question arises what is its end? What does God give it to do in this world. Its end is love. A larger question, a wider view arises. What is the end, the design of the earth itself as it sails through space, with the race of man upon it? We know that the law given on Sinai and the Cross on Calvary and the triumphal ascension of Christ from the Mount of Olives, that all the supernatural revelation of God in the Scriptures is not in conflict but in full harmony with His revelation of Himself in nature. It is simply supernatural—that is, it is above nature—more full than nature—not in conflict or in opposition to nature.

What then is the purpose or design of the great universe? We begin to catch a glimpse of the lofty end, it is love—a being who can

love, who has the capability of loving. As the various stages of creation pass before us as God in His two books has revealed them to us, we recognize that each is good in itself—as God saw it was good, but also good as a stage leading on to the next. At each stage, there is a commandment, “God said,” and there is God’s judgment pronounced “it is good”—light—the globe of the earth—now the gift of life in myriad forms of vegetation—and now from the earth can be seen the moon, and sun and stars. Now that the earth is prepared for it God creates animal life in myriad forms grade after grade advancing through countless ages and all is good. What is the design? What is yet to come? At last, God brings forth man gifted by the great Creator with likeness to Himself; and “all is good.”

Now, we ask what is likeness to Himself? Man has intellect, power to know the truth. Man has a moral sense, power to see the right. Man has will, power to choose the right; anything more in man? Yes, vastly more. He not only can see the truth and the right—he can love the truth and love the right and can choose as he loves. And so he can love the Being in whom truth and right and love have their loftiest expression. He can love God who is truth and right, but higher yet, who is love.

God, who is love, has created on this little earth a being who can love, who is capable of loving. The many stages of creation through

the countless ages have at last attained the designed end—a being who can love God supremely, who can love himself properly as a creature of God and who can love every other man as he loves himself. And now when this being, the culmination of God's creative power, fails to exercise his nature according to the great law of his being, God's infinite love seeks to restore him to His original design, and in so doing shows the attractiveness of loveliness in Himself in more fullness than was possible in mere creation, in all the wonderful self sacrifice of redemption.

The value of anything may be inferred from who makes it, how much pains he takes in making it, how great resources he uses, how much patience and persistence and time he spends in making it.

Who can estimate the value of love in God's sight—the end designed in all God's work of creation and redemption. The philosopher Kant says there are two perpetual inexplicable wonders—the starry heavens over our heads—and the moral law within us—the categorical, imperative. Here we have the design, the end of both of the heavens and of the law—it is love. God from the beginning had the great purpose or design in mind as He moulded the material creation, and then formed a being uniting in himself the material and the spiritual creations, the end is love, a being capable of loving. What the end of

the universe with its millions of suns? What the end of the spiritual beings about His throne? A being joining the two natures, material and spiritual—a being who can and will love. Jehovah describes to Job some of the glory of creation—

“When the morning stars sang together,  
“And all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

Surely we should appreciate somewhat the grandeur of our nature and may well cultivate an enthusiasm for humanity as God designs it, and God with patience and self-sacrificing love seeks to carry out His great design. What is the highest possible life man can attain? To know the truth? Yes—and especially to love it, to choose the right? Yes. Not simply because he ought, but because, he loves it. How shall man make the most out of life here and now? By cultivating his God like powers of love—by fulfilling God’s design. The end of the commandment is love. As the spiritual beings about His throne, the sons of God, saw His great design unfolding through the various stages of creation, they shouted for joy. Surely we, as we recognize God’s design in creating us should shout for joy.

Alas, how the race of man has missed the lofty end of its creation— and thus has filled the earth with the groans of sorrow instead of the shouts of joy. Again, we ask the question. What is the end of the Christian Church? What



is its purpose? What does God call it to do in the world? The end is love. It is to live love, to preach love, to advance love in mankind. God has not given up His great design. He not only holds before the church the great end, but shows how it may be brought about in its own experience and as it proclaims the Gospel of Christ to all mankind—God's end and the means of accomplishing this end are all found in our text.

Love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned. The church must itself see Christ the Savior and trust Him fully—have a sincere faith; and she must so proclaim and commend Christ to mankind that they will have this sincere faith. This will result in a good conscience, one forgiven of past sin and enlightened to see and approve the right as God reveals it. This will result in a pure heart, a heart cleansed from sin—from the lust of selfishness that ignores God, that ignores man as the creature of God—a heart now renewed in the likeness of Christ to love God supremely and to love one's self properly as a creature of God, and to love his fellow-man as he loves himself.

This is the experience of the Christian church; this the result of her proclaiming and living the Gospel of Christ, a strong, clear faith, seeing and trusting Christ, a good conscience, forgiven, renewed and made controlling by the power of Christ, a pure heart cleansed from all dislike and hatred and filled with love of God and of humanity.

The Christian church is thus to have Christ's spirit and to carry on Christ's life and mission in the world. The church is to live and labor in the highest sphere of human life and with the fullest means to secure the end of God's commandment, to do away with all human hatred and misery, and to bring about all human love and joy—to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. The glorious end of God in creation and in redemption becomes the end of the Christian church as it catches a vision of her God-given mission. Our Catechism has brought us through the teaching and appeal of the truths of the Christian religion to the experience of the Spirit's power in them, through the organization of the church to its mission to live a life of thanksgiving—a joyous, beautiful life in the service of God—and it now instructs us that good works of this praiseful life can only be performed according to the law of God. The truths we believe, the person we trust, the forgiveness and acceptance with God, we possess; all these lead to salvation—and salvation is love—the restoration of man to God's great design to love, to obedience to the law of God. This law is found in the Ten Commandments—one table on duties to God, the second table on duties to man, and as summarized by Christ, love God with all your powers and love your fellow-man as yourself, and so live Christ-like lives.

The Catechism in future Lord's Days holds before us the Ten Commandments and the Lord's

Prayer, the law or word of God, and man's response to that word in aspiration.

Two questions force themselves upon our careful attention—

*First:* How shall the church regard its mission.

*Second:* How successful has it been in carrying it out? How shall the church regard the Ten Commandments. In what sense have they been set aside? As the means of attaining life—the life of forgiveness and acceptance with God can never be attained by our keeping the Ten Commandments, by our own righteousness. Christ is our Savior; He, by His perfect obedience and His atoning death merits for us salvation.

Whatever unbelievers may say that the Ten Commandments are impractical, whatever wrong views some believers in Christ may have that the Ten Commandments are no longer the rule of life we clearly see as we study human nature and as we learn of God that the Ten Commandments are still in full force. The commands or laws of God in the material universe enforce themselves, they have power in them to inflict penalties for disobedience and to bestow well being for obedience; it is the same with the laws of the mind and of the soul. The mental and moral laws of God have the power of enforcing themselves. The man who obeys the laws of gravitation has welfare—if he jumps from a skyscraper, he is broken to pieces. The man who

eats healthy food in proper times and amounts and ways has welfare—the one who drinks poison dies. The youth who studies wisely becomes learned—the one who idles away his time remains ignorant.

It is the same with the moral law, the Commandments of God. They are in force both East and West of the Mississippi River, in the old world and in the new, wherever man lives on this round earth; they enforce themselves with penalties for disobedience or welfare for obedience. Take, for example, family life wherever found. Where love rules, and to the extent in which it rules there is welfare; when parents love children and the children love parents and brothers and sisters love each other there dwells happiness. If it is simply natural love, God so made human hearts—if it is this natural love refined and enforced by spiritual love in Christ the happiness is purer and higher. Christian love makes the Christian home the happiest place on earth, blessed with the happiness of heaven.

On the contrary, when parents are selfish, always seeking their own way—when children towards parents and to each other are selfish, always seeking their own way, where envy, jealousy, strife and conflict hold sway—the law of God, the Ten Commandments are in force—they work their penalty of themselves, and the home is the abode of misery and woe. It is the same way with friends; when they appreciate, trust and love each other, there is the happiness

of friendship; if they fall apart in distrust and suspicion and coldness, the happiness vanishes away of its own motion.

It is the same in the wider ranges of social life. In society as we find it today there are many classes—the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the capitalist and the labor classes. Paul speaks of himself as having a great possession in the Gospel of Christ but it was for others—he says he is thereby a debtor to the bond and free, to the Jew and Gentile. The more one has the more one can serve one's fellows, and the more real satisfaction he has in the services of love—the love of humanity brings welfare. In proportion as that spirit prevails there is happiness. Even where classes exist. In our day there is much conflict between labor and capital—as each seeks its own, to grasp and to hold and from such conflict much suffering and unhappiness results. When the Christian spirit of love prevails, and in proportion as it prevails, when capital seeks the welfare of labor and labor seeks the welfare of capital, where they are brothers laboring together for the common good, there happiness abounds. Capital if acquired by well directed efforts to promote the good of mankind, if acquired by the service of love—love of doing good—of advancing humanity brings a satisfaction in itself; and so labor in high or low position for the good of humanity has the satisfaction of achievement and of love.

But capital trying to get the better of mankind, and labor trying to get the better of mankind, these bring only the distress of selfishness however successful they may be in securing their selfish aims.

So take the wider classification in the race of mankind, that of race and specially of national life. A nation in proportion that it lives for its own self is apt to have the jealousy of its neighbors—and dislike and grasping arise—and ambition to get the advantage follows. Now as these flame forth in wide action, they result in war, and today we have the distress and suffering that war brings. We look forward to the peace that shall be brought about by the victory in war and hope it will be the victory of the right of democracy to rule in national life, for which our own free land entered the struggle.

When peace comes it will be by agreement among the nations in treaties made with each other. But we all recognize there can be no lasting or world wide peace until nations obey the Ten Commandments, until each nation loves its neighbor as itself. Our own country cannot be happy if it loves itself alone; it must love all other nations as it loves itself—and so seek the good of all.

When all the nations seek the welfare of the race—of humanity. This will be the Kingdom of God on earth for which we labor and pray. The reign of Christ will be the reign not of power but of love.

The second question the church is forced to consider is. How successful has it been by its preaching and its life in producing love? How has it attained the end of the commandment, and of its own existence and mission? It is quite evident there has been much success, and very large failure; it is impossible to rightly estimate the amount and character of the one or the other. It is quite evident that its failure as seen in the fearful war of nations—as seen in the social conflicts in Christian lands, as seen in the multitude of individual lives still engrossed in self seeking, ignoring God and humanity, that its failure is due largely to the church having had an imperfect view of its mission—to its having in some degree and in many instances contented itself with enforcing the means and not sufficiently valuing the end. It has spent great effort in having a pure creed—has had much controversy within itself over important articles, often awaking feelings the reverse of love for some of its own members and for those outside its fold—and so also with its government, often using it as a club for heretics rather than as an olive branch to welcome believers—and so also with its worship—often magnifying the forms above the spirit—creed—government, worship. What would a church be without them—but they are only means to an end—the end is love.

We must know God as revealed in Jesus Christ in order to love Him. Come know Him, said the



church, know Him with me, believe Him, worship Him, obey Him—all in order that you and I together may love Him—the end is love—the love that delights in Him—the love that values the return love and ever seeks it as the most priceless possession, the love that seeks to serve Him.

We must know the truth about ourselves and our fellow-men. We must know humanity in order to love all men. Who is this being man? He is the being at the end of God's creative work, a being made in His own likeness, a being who can love. He has gone astray from the design of God in making him, but God has not given him up to his wandering, but follows him to save him, to bring him back to his original design—to love. How much does God love him? Hear what Christ says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son that whomsoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life." So God's church is to love all mankind.

In our land during the great war many homes had hanging in the front window a service flag—there is one star on it—or there may be others—the star indicates that one son is in the army, he may be in some training camp, or he may be in France on the battlefield. One son of the family has given himself to the service of his country in the cause of democracy for all nations. In the early evening on these clear days you may see a bright star shining alone in the blue sky. Let it remind you of God's service flag.

He gave His only Begotten Son for the salvation of humanity, and let it quicken our loyalty to Him and to His cause, to the love of our fellow-man, to serve Him, and so to awaken His love for Christ and humanity until the whole heaven is filled with the multitude of stars like Him.





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